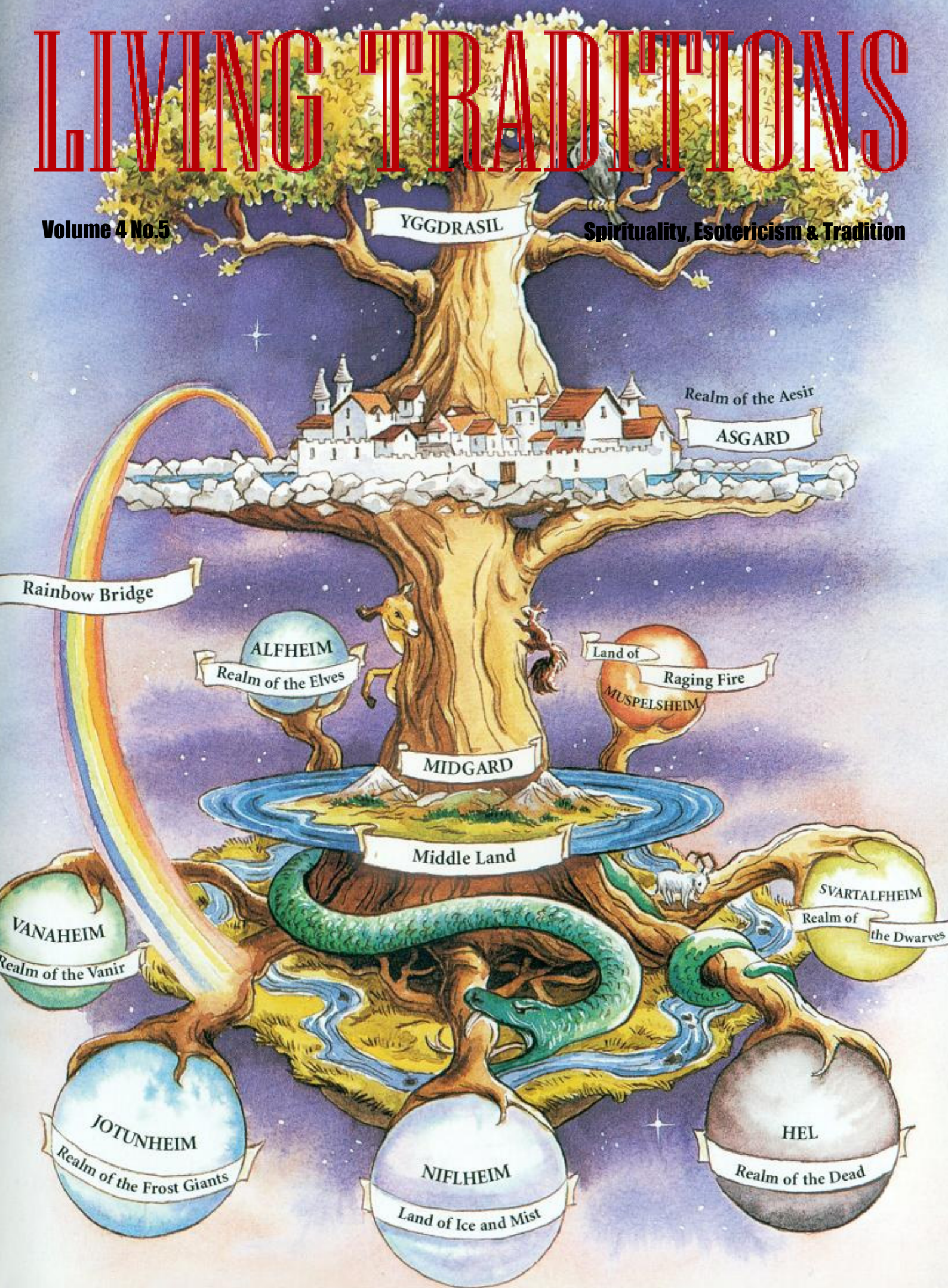


LIVING TRADITIONS

Volume 4 No.5

Spirituality, Esotericism & Tradition



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European Pagan Memory Day

A survey among pagans with different beliefs made us choose for the celebration the 24th February: on this day, in 391



C.E., Theodosius issued an edict which condemned all pagan practices and made Vesta's fire (the one who had to burn forever in Rome) to be set off.

Since the fire is sacred for all the so-called pagan religions, this event has been chosen as a symbol of the beginning of the many tries to delete pagan religions across Europe.

We are here to remember.

We are here to honour.

We are here to found.

The fire extinguished on sacred altars

after the fire that nourished the myth has been extinguished and the emotions abandoned humans.

Everything became shape, everything became word

The illusion conquered people's feelings.

Their ears became deaf

humans became barbarians and animals became strangers

Tagete and Numa, Orpheus and Homer became undistinguished shadows

while infernal terrors killed human feelings.

We are here to relight the fire,

We are here to get out of the horrors

We are here to breathe new life in the shadows that have been

We are here to listen again to Orpheus' song

We are here to remember.

We are here to hear again the Gods' weapons under Troy's walls

We are here to honour.

We are here to relight Numa's and Tagete's fires

We are here to found.

Claudio Simeoni

<http://www.giomopaganomemoria.it/indexeng.html>



Path to the Gods: Anglo-Saxon Paganism for Beginners

Path to the Gods: Anglo-Saxon Paganism for Beginners contains everything you need to know to begin practicing the religion of your Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Within these pages you will be introduced to the Gods and Goddesses of Heathenry, and to fundamental beliefs and



key concepts such as Wyrd, Frith, the Sacred and Holy, Heathen Thews (Virtues) and more.

The basic rites of Heathenry are explained, holy tides are discussed, and a set of rites for each of the holy tides is offered. Included also is a suggested reading list to deepen your studies."

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Pagan eBooks for Free.

I have a healthy passion for the collection of books, well; perhaps you would call it compulsive, I am sure you know what I mean. Having recently purchased a Kindle, I find my collection theme has moved over to that so much so, I have perhaps as many unread books on kindle, than I do in physical ownership. At least this saves shelf space!

It occurred to me, that, you could find a lot of free books out there and so I started collecting those to read that interested me, mainly pagan, wicca and holistic subjects with the occasional novel thrown in.

I then decided to share this passion on Facebook to great success.

"Pagan ebooks for free" is a valuable on-line resource for those who would love to read the books but whose pockets cannot always match the desire, and the idea I had to share the available free books on these subjects for the benefit of others to do the same.

I daily check the web for appropriate free books, and post them at <http://www.facebook.com/PaganeBooksforfree> to be then transferred to your Kindle. You do not have a kindle? Woah! Come on! Actually, we have taken care of that, as in the about section on the page we give de-

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These are not just run of the mill books either; we have fantastic authors such as the Avalon Press, Anna Franklin, and other modern writers, as well as books, like Gardner and other classics and history books that go a long way back, that are perhaps out of print or hard to get normally. The range is totally eclectic and huge, covering, everything from Wicca, and other neo pagan religions, to recycling, self help, fiction, demonology, the list is endless.... And they are ALL FREE!

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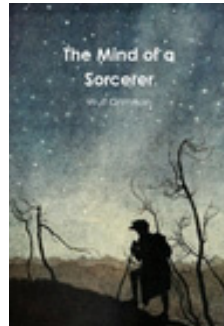
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THE DANGERS OF MONOTHEISM



WULF GRIMSSON

Wulf Grimsson is the author of *Loki's Way: The Path of the Sorcerer in the Age of Iron*, *Loki and Odin: Rites of Initiation and Sorcery*, *Male Mysteries and the Secrets of the Mannerbund* and *Loki's Way: Essays and Musings*. His latest book *The Mind of a Sorcerer* examines how we must think to work sorcery successfully.



It offers a critique of modernist forms of occultism and religion and looks at the characteristic thought patterns of our ancestors. The Dangers of Monotheism is an excerpt reprinted with the authors permission.



The Dangers of Monotheism

To appreciate the significance of polytheism and animism to our ancestors and why it is central to developing the Mind of a Sorcerer, we need to consider the inherent dangers of monotheism, in terms of religion and esotericism as well as politics and society.

One of the major points of contention within the history of spirituality has been the debate between monotheists and polytheists. Monotheists like to argue that the worship of one God is a more developed form of religious belief than the worship of many deities. In addition they often attempt to explain religious history through the supposedly illuminated light of monotheism and erroneously reinterpret older faiths such as those of Egypt and India as having many Gods only

insomuch that they are the expression of the one.

If we critically examine the history of religion we find that the supposed progression from animism through polytheism to monotheism (and as some would suggest to rationalism and beyond) is not sustained by hard evidence. Societies rise and fall and go through cycles much like the seasons and religious expressions will vary according to the period.

For example Egypt had a high culture and was polytheistic and its only monotheistic Pharaoh was Akhenaton who could be best defined as the world's first religious terrorist used violence to enforce his brand of monotheism with the sun as the sole deity and himself as its living representative. If we examine other religious traditions monotheism seems to be a form of religious disturbance or neurosis rather than the epitome of spiritual development. Having many deities (regardless of how one interprets them) brings with it a state of tolerance. If I have many Gods then I appreciate that others may have their own Gods as well as differing forms of practise.





As soon as I declare that my God (singular) is supreme then all other deities are demonised and the path to religious conflict is assured.

If we examine both Judaism and Christianity they offer good examples of how polytheistic religions degenerate into monotheism. Judaism was a simple desert faith with a God and Goddess and pagan practises much like the religions of the surrounding tribes. Over a period of time, perhaps under the influence of Egyptian monotheists and a desire to create a collective identity separate from surrounding traditions, Judaism jettisoned the Goddess and became a savage monotheistic faith. The Old Testament is filled with massacres, torture and killing brought about by the belief in one God and the associated assumption that the Jews are his chosen people above all others. This closed form of monotheism is marked by a belief they alone are Gods people and hence they must sustain an insular society based on their own values opposing all interaction with others.

This new form of Judaism was accompanied with a vast number of laws and regulations to keep the chosen people pure and since surrounding cultures were open to varieties of sexual practise (including male and female temple prostitution) it was aggressively misogynist and homophobic. Indeed it is the first culture to be



recorded as having prohibitions against homosexual behaviour.

The characteristic intolerance and fanaticism of the prophets and missionaries have their model and justification in the example set by Yahweh
Mircea Eliade, History of Religious Ideas Volume One

Within Judaism various revivals of polytheism occurred. The influence of Hellenistic thought created the Kabbalah which while monotheistic in name was polytheistic in expression with many sephiroth, deities, forms and levels of being. It is from the various forms of Hellenised Judaism, sometimes known as pre-Christian Gnosticism that the various forms of Christianity developed. There was never a single and uniform belief system known as "Christianity" but many Christianities ranging from legalistic Jewish sects to radical forms of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism within Christianity once again represented the resurgence of polytheism with multiple beings, aeons, archons and complex cosmologies. Some sects even believed Jehovah was an evil mad deity and the serpent was divine and incarnated within the consciousness of Jesus! While such beliefs were suppressed by the developing political structure of the Church, they were soon replaced with what could be seen as the "orthodox" polytheism of Roman

Catholicism as expressed in the cult of saints, festivals, icons and rites.

Within the history of philosophy we can also see the reoccurrence of polytheism as a primary structure. In Egyptian the Neters were conscious principles which embodied a wide range of functions. They strongly influenced Greek philosophy to such an extent many scholars believe that Plato's Theory of Forms is a philosophical adaptation of the Neters. These Forms, Universals or Archetypes are multiple and represent the framework on which the physical and psychological worlds are formed. While expressed in Philosophical language, this world of "Being" is akin to the various realms inhabited by intelligences in Norse, Vedic and Tibetan Buddhist cosmologies, among others.

The Germans do not think it in keeping with the divine majesty to confine gods within walls or to portray them in the likeness of any human countenance. Their holy places are woods and groves, and they apply the names of deities to that hidden presence which is seen only by the eye of reverence.

Tacitus, Germania 9

While there are many possible interpretations of the Gods, the ancient saw them as numinous forces or intelligences which were ontologically real. While they may be expressed in various symbolic forms via myth and legend they were never seen as literally contained or locked within language.

Polytheism offered the ancients, and offers us, a living connection to the numinous and an inte-

gral worldview or Weltanschauung which includes the interconnectedness of man, the natural world and the numinous.

In the Indo European account of creation the giant Ymir is carved into pieces to create the framework of the worlds. Odin and his brothers ground Ymir's flesh into dirt, the maggots that appear in his flesh become the dwarves that live under the earth, his bones become the mountains, his teeth rocks and pebbles. Then Odin thows then Ymir's brains into the sky to create the clouds, the story continues with Odin and his brothers breathing life into Ask and Embla whose bodies had been formed from the remains of Ymir but lacked "consciousness".

*Soul they had not, sense they had not,
Heat nor motion, nor goodly hue;
Soul gave Othin, sense gave Hönir,
Heat gave Lothur and goodly hue*

Volupsa Stanza 17

The Indo European creation myth is significant in comparison to the Christian tale which represents creation *ex nihilo*, the formation of the world out of nothing. In the Indo European account the divine (i.e. Ymir) and the Gods are part of one united multiverse; man and the world is part of the numinous and created from Ymir's various bodily parts and the Gods themselves (which evolved earlier in the creation tale from the universe itself) breathe life into man. Everything is interconnected – the Gods, man and the universe – nothing exists "outside" this





organic whole and there is no division between the various parts. This myth is matched to the death of Purusha the cosmic man in the Vedic account and his body being used to create the universe. Purusha's body is also divided into part parts which become the basis of the Varnas or cultural divisions of Indian society. Purusha's form also expresses itself in the three Gunas which are the energetic flows of the universe (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). Out of interest the Varnas and the Gunas can be related to the Three Functions outlined by Georges Dumézil which form the cultural foundation of all Indo European societies.

In the Judeo Christian creation myth the very opposite is true. Yahweh aka Jehovah exists for eternity, alone and without comparison. For Christians he has two other forms Jesus and the Holy Spirit, yet even within the various sects there is a debate over whether Jesus was a created being, an Archangel or a form or hypostasis of Yahweh. Yahweh creates out of nothing the universe and man. There is no connection between any of the disparate facets of the creation. God is totally separate from his creation and his creation is totally separate from mankind. The extreme separation from mankind and nature including animals and the environment has caused untold environmental damage and continues to do so. Man was given dominion over the animals, fish and birds and he has used them without thought ever since. This model includes a natural devaluing of everything that is physical from the human body to animals and nature.

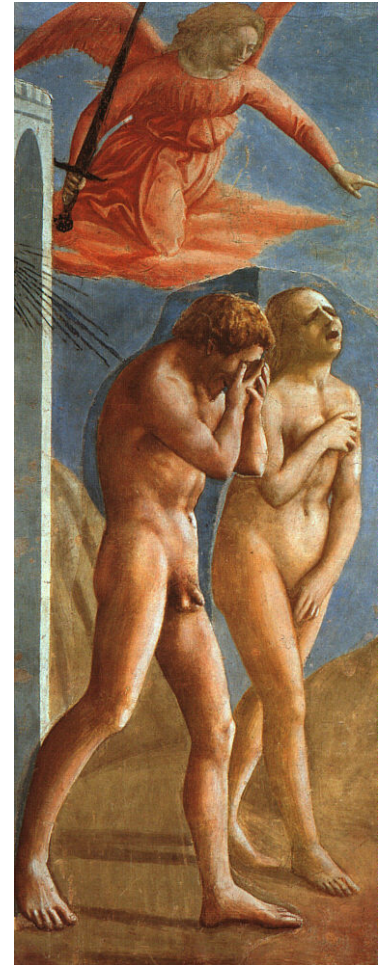
And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing.

Genesis 1:26

Origen, an early church father, expressed it even more clearly.....*"all physical creation is an effect of sin, its effect is to serve as purgatory, and it would have been much better if it had never been needed"*.

At the same time the extreme dualism of the monotheisms create an immense sense of existentialist dread since the only way to achieve a "contract" with God is through total blind submission. Such submission is expressed within each of the three major monotheistic religions somewhat differently; through legalism and purity (Judaism), through belief (Christianity) and through submission (Islam). Such contracts all include a further dualism reflected in simplistic moral codes which have supposedly been handed down from on high enforced through a received text. They are marked by the fact that they have no room for subjective personal experience, individual interpretation or "situational adaptation" – the laws are simple, black and white and inalienable.

While all spiritual traditions have degrees of dualism, it is only within monotheism that dualism is taken to such an extreme, there is not only a total dualism between God and man and man and creation but a total dualism between believers and non-believers and right and wrong. Of course the controller of the contract between man and God is found within the ecclesiastical structure of each faith and hence the believer is constantly in fear as he submits to the church and priesthood in the hope that someday he will receive a place in heaven.





Svaneti

Svaneti – where the Living feed the Dead and the Dead feed the Living

Michael Berman

How do we come to terms with losing those we love when they pass away? One way is by having, or at least convincing ourselves we can still have, an on-going relationship with them of some kind, and this is what the celebration of Lipanali enables the people of Svaneti to do.

However before looking at Lipanali in more detail, some background information on the region.

Situated on the southern slopes of the central Greater Caucasus, the province of Svaneti (Georgian: სვანეთი) is in the north western part of Georgia. The landscape is dominated by mountains that are separated by deep gorges, and four of the 10 highest peaks of the Caucasus are located in the region. The highest mountain in Georgia, Mount Shkhara at 5,201 meters (17,059 feet), is also to be found in the province.

The Svans are usually identified with the Soanes mentioned by Greek geographer Strabo, who placed them more or less in the area still occupied by the modern-day Svans. The province had been a dependency of Colchis, and of its successor kingdom of Lazica (Egrisi) until AD 552, when the Svans took advantage of the Lazic War, repudiated this connexion and went over to the Persians. The Byzantines wanted the region, for if they secured its passes, they could prevent Persian raids on the border areas of Lazica. With the end of the war (562), Svaneti again became part of Lazica. Then, the province joined the Kingdom of Ab-

khazia to form a unified monarchy which was incorporated into the Kingdom of Georgia in the early 11th century. Svaneti became a duchy (saeristavo) within it, governed by a duke (eristavi). The province's Orthodox culture flourished particularly during the Georgian "golden age" under Queen Tamar (r. 1184-1213), who was respected almost as goddess by the Svanetians. The legend has it that the duchy was annually visited by Tamar.

The Svans, the indigenous population of Svaneti, were Christianized in the 4th-6th centuries. However, some remnants of old paganism have also been maintained in the region. Saint George (known as Jgëræg to the locals), a patron saint of Georgia, is the most respected saint, and the Svans have retained many of their old traditions, including blood revenge.

Typically bilingual, they use both Georgian and their own, unwritten Svan language, which together with the Georgian, Mingrelian, and Laz languages constitute the South Caucasian or Kartvelian language family.

As for the rituals associated with death in Svaneti, a number of traditions have evolved to cope with it.

Men don't shave for 14 days after a death, while widows wear black with a lapel badge bearing a photo of the deceased. In the home there is a shrine with more photos, and visitors will be given a drink, to pour a few drops on the floor, and toast the deceased with the rest. Forty days and three months after the death, family and friends go to the cemetery; a table is setup on the grave with food and drink (and perhaps other household items such as a radio).

The women wail and cry, then the men line up, hats off, to say prayers and, of course,

toast the deceased with chacha [a Georgian spirit, similar to vodka]; then the table is removed from the grave, and the food is eaten.

As in every Orthodox church, tapers are lit by everyone who comes into a church; those at the front left are for prayers for women, those at the front right are for prayers for men, and those at the back are for the dead.

The dead are commemorated on Mariamoba (St Mariam's Day, 28 August), and also in Khaishi on Jvedi Ham, the second Sunday in January, when the souls of dead relatives stay overnight with their families.

Burford, T. "Rituals of death in Svaneti"
<http://www.bradtguides.com/rituals-of-death-in-svaneti.html> Retrieved 8/2/2012.

Lipnali, the main focus of this article, is celebrated in Svaneti one day before Epiphany, on January 18th each year. During this period souls of ancestors or "didebuli" (the majestic ones) are invited from the western entrance of a local church all the way to each family's home, where they stay until the next morning. Every family carefully prepares for this ritual. The day the souls are invited, "adgom", is spent cleaning and scrubbing the house. As they say in Svaneti, - "the spirits will not enter the house during adgom, unless all bits of fat are cleaned."

The Georgian Orthodox Church assigns its heaviest fasting to this day, while Svans developed a folk ritual around it. The head of the family puts several kveri (small, round breads with a filling, "lemzir" in Svanian) and zedashe (best quality wine used for religious rituals) on a wooden tray, goes to the western entrance of a local church and asks the Lord to let his ancestors out of heaven. After this, he returns back home, all the while praying and asking his ancestors to follow him. The rest of the family waits inside the house with a table full of special dishes ready for the "guests". After midnight, during epiphany, an especially rich feast is organized by the family. The didebuli are entertained during the whole night. Family members tell fairy tales, sing and play on the Chuniri, a stringed instrument, and try to imagine those who have passed away. Spirits are said to love stories and whoever can tell stories, they all do during this week. A special table is laid out for the didebuli where no living person is allowed to

sit. The chairs are pulled out, which makes it seem like there are actually souls sitting on them. On Saturday evening the didebuli leave for a Lalkhori (a gathering) where they discuss the fate of the family and what will happen to it over the next year. The souls are said to protect their descendants this way. On Sunday the souls return from the Lalkhori and the family greets them with hot porridge. Lipnali lasts until the following Monday. On Monday morning, "joodi" (long morning), the souls are seen off. Every member of the family needs to be up before sunrise. The family blesses their ancestor's feast table, after which the head of the family takes milk with honey, pours it bit by bit on the ground and prays, - "m'jaar Tuaar shukvaru jaarkh " - "may you have sunny roads". In this way, the spirits of the dead are sent off, the necessary order re-established, and society is ready to restart its everyday life.

As to whether the Svans truly believe in souls of their ancestors visiting them, the convincing stories they tell about their existence would seem to indicate that they do.

Of course, events and rituals representing efforts to communicate with the dead can be found in many different cultures, with the Mexican Day of the Dead (Spanish: Día de Muertos) perhaps being the most well-known example. The celebration takes place on November 1–2, in connection with the Catholic holidays of All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls' Day (November 2), and focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember friends and family members who have died. Traditions connected with the holiday include building private altars honouring the deceased using sugar skulls, marigolds, and the favourite foods and beverages of the departed and visiting graves with these as gifts.

Scholars trace the origins of the modern Mexican holiday to indigenous observances dating back hundreds of years and to an Aztec festival dedicated to a goddess called Mictecacihuatl. The holiday has since spread throughout the world: In Brazil, Dia de Finados is a public holiday that many Brazilians celebrate by visiting cemeteries and churches. In Spain, there are festivals and parades, and, at the end of the day, people gather at cemeteries and pray for their dead loved ones.

Similar observances occur elsewhere in Europe, and similarly themed celebrations appear in many Asian and African cultures too. The intent in each case is to encourage visits by the souls, so that the souls will hear the prayers and the comments of the living directed to them.

The Svanetian ritual is not simply an attempt to maintain an on-going relationship with the dead though. The spirits of the dead, the ancestral souls of the family, also helped to ensure the family's welfare. The immediate ancestral spirits were treated in a special way, and specific animals were sacrificed to them. The souls of the sacrificial animals were believed to be chased away (or urged on) by the ancestral spirits to the pastures of the netherworld. By means of these sacrifices, the souls were pleased, satisfied and calmed, and in return they provided the living with the guarantees in life they were looking for. In this way, life was completely reconstituted, everything began afresh and the community was ready to start a new year with new hopes and goals. As the sun "shifts" or "turns" towards the spring and light begins to increase, Lipanali is about regeneration and new beginnings, and thus helps to provide a "kick start" to the New Year.

At the time of the winter solstice, the thresholds of the inner and outer worlds are believed to become open for the various undesirable and desirable powers and forces which can penetrate through these passages. Special precautions therefore need to be taken and Lipanali forms part of this.

Visitations from the land of the deceased to the world of the living, or from the outer to the inner world, respectively, are well known among many peoples and are associated with the cosmological symbolism of outer/inner and nature/culture, respectively. The 'centre', consecrated through rituals, chants and prayers, was the place from where communication with the supernatural beings (powers) was believed to be possible, and the protective centre of the cultivated area, the house, provides the setting in which the winter solstice rituals, which date back to pagan times, took place, and still take place in Georgia.

Apart from special days set aside for the purpose, other means of communicating with the dead practised in various parts of the world in-

clude making use of Ouija boards, pendulums, channelling, and conducting séances, though these methods are often practised as a form of entertainment rather than with any more serious intent.

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Michael Berman

Michael Berman's published work includes *The Power of Metaphor* for Crown House, *The Nature of Shamanism and the Shamanic Story* for Cambridge Scholars Publishing, *Shamanic Journeys through the Caucasus and Shamanic Journeys*, *Shamanic Stories* for O-Books, *Journeys outside Time* for Pendraig Publishing, and *Tales of Power* for Lear Books. *A Bridge to the Other Side: Death in the Folk Tradition* and *Georgia through Earth, Fire, Air and Water* are both due to be published by Moon Books in 2012.



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SHAPE-SHIFTERS AND THEIR STORIES

MICHAEL BERMAN

Shape-shifting occurs when a being (usually human) either has the ability to change its shape into that of another person, creature, or other entity or finds its shape involuntarily changed by someone else.

One of the attributes often credited to shamans, as well as to witches and other kinds of magical practitioner, is the ability to shape-shift from human into animal shape. Sometimes this change is a literal one, human flesh transformed into animal flesh or covered over by animal skin; in other accounts, the soul leaves the shaman's unconscious body to enter into the body of an animal, fish or bird. And it is not only shamans who have such powers according to tales from around the globe. Shape shifting is part of a mythic and story-telling tradition stretching back over thousands of years. The gods of various mythologies are credited with this ability, as are the heroes of the great epic sagas.

In Nordic myth, Odin could change his shape into any beast or bird; in Greek myth, Zeus often assumed animal shape in his relentless pursuit of young women. Cernunnos, the lord of animals in Celtic mythology, wore the shape of a stag, and also the shape of a man with a heavy rack of horns. In the Odyssey, Homer tells the tale of Proteus—a famous soothsayer who would not give away his knowledge unless forced to do so. Menelaus came upon him while he slept, and held on to him tightly as he shape-shifted into a lion, a snake, a leopard, a bear, etc. Defeated, Proteus returned to his own shape and Menelaus

won the answers to his questions.

Not all transformations are from human to animal shape. The Great Selkie of Sule Skerry described in Scottish ballads, is a man up-on dry land, a selkie [seal] in the sea, and he leaves a human maid pregnant with his child. And Irish legends tell of men who marry seal or otter women and then hide their animal skins from them to prevent them from returning to the water. Generally these women bear several sons, but pine away for their true home. If they manage to find the skin, they then return to the sea with barely a thought for the ones left behind.

Japanese fairy tales warn of the danger of kitsune, the fox-wife. The fox takes on the form of a beautiful woman in these stories, but to wed her brings madness and death. In Tibet, a frog-husband is an unexpected source of joy to a shy young bride. He is not a man disguised as a frog but a frog disguised as a man. When his young wife burns his frog skin to keep her lover in the shape she prefers, the frog-husband loses his magical powers, gracefully resigning himself to ordinary human life instead

Berman, 2007, pp.134-135

We all go through a stage in life of wanting, and often even trying, to be what we are not, hence the fascination with shape-shifting all through the ages. In my own case, for example, born with curly hair, I spent hours blow-drying it in my teenage years to make it look straight, and



then of course there are those born with curly hair who long to make it straight. Whether it is a wish for breast enlargements or reductions, injections of Botox or liposuction, hair transplants or depilation - the list is endless. Then there are those who seek more fundamental changes, gender reassignment for example.

This yearning in our formative years for changes to the "script" that were never intended seems to be more or less universal, that is until we finally learn to come to terms with who we are, and this that helps to explain our fascination with the theme.

The Seneca are one of the members of the powerful Iroquois tribe, and live in the western part of New York State, along the shores of Lake Ontario to the west of the Finger Lake region. The two tales about shape-shifters presented below come from a huge (500 page) book of Seneca myths collected by Jeremiah Curtin at the turn of the 20th century. ... The tales are mostly set in a pre-human dreamtime, and the players are the conventional zoomorphic first people.

The Hunter who became a Fish

TWO brothers started off to hunt. After they had camped they heard a peculiar noise and one of them said, "I am going to find out what that is," and he followed the sound. It seemed to come from inside a hollow tree. Thinking there might be a bear in the tree the young man ran back to camp and said to his brother, "There must be a bear in that tree over there, but it makes a noise like a whirlwind."

They went to the tree and one of them climbed up and looked into the hole. At first he couldn't see anything. Then, at the bottom of the hole,

he saw a spotted trout jumping around.

He got the trout out and threw it down to his brother, who said, "This is a curious fish. Let's take it to camp."

"Don't touch it," said the other, "It might be something that will harm us."

But the young man didn't listen; he took the trout to camp, cleaned and ate it

Right away, he said, "Bring some water, I am thirsty."

Water was brought and he drank and kept drinking, "Couldn't drink enough."

"I think the fish is making you sick," said his brother.

"Get more water," was the answer. "Take my moccasins and fill them."

When the young man was tired of bringing water he said to his brother, "You must go to the spring where you can drink all the water you want."

He went to the spring, drank till he was tired, then rested and drank again. When the other brother went to the spring he was frightened; his brother's mouth was like the mouth of a fish.

"Doesn't your mouth feel strange?" asked he.

The man put up his hand and then knew that his mouth had grown large, but he kept on drinking.

The next time the young man went to the spring his brother was half fish; fish to the waist, and he was still drinking.



Later he went to the spring and found that his brother had become a fish and gone into the water.

The next morning when the young man went to the spring, he saw a great fish far under the water, and the spring had become a pond.

He sat down on the bank and soon the Fish rose to the surface, and said, "My poor brother, go home and tell our father what has happened to me. When you want fish come here and get all you need; this pond will always be full of fish."

The young man went home and told what had taken place. The people came to the pond; the Fish rose to the surface, and said, "I shall not be a fish long, I am going to be a NYAGWAIHE."

Soon the Fish changed to a NYAGWAIHE (a great bear). The Bear stayed around the pond and of each party that came to fish, it killed and ate one man. Nobody saw this, but each party always lost one of its number, and people began to think that if the Bear lived long it would kill a great many men.

A council was called to decide what to do, and three young men promised to kill the Bear. They went to the pond, but never came back.

The Bear's brother said, "I will go to the pond, maybe I can drive him away."

And taking parched corn flour to eat, new moccasins to wear, and a good bow and twelve arrows he went to the pond and camped on the bank.

That night he dreamed that his brother, in the form of a man, came to him, and asked, "Why are you here? I can kill you."

And he answered, "I came to drive you away, for you are doing a great deal of harm."

The man said, "I will start at daylight and run. Follow, and see if you can overtake me."

The next morning the young man went in the direction the man had indicated, running as fast as he could. Just at midday he saw bear tracks, and he called out, "Now I'll overtake you!"

He ran faster than before, ran till dark, then camped and built a fire. When he opened his bundle of corn flour it had turned to ants; he had nothing to eat. The Bear had done this to deprive his brother of food.

While the young man sat by the fire thinking, he heard someone approaching; he knew it was the Bear and he had drawn his bow, ready to aim, when the Bear called out, "Wait, brother, till I talk with you. If you will let me go I will start early to-morrow morning, and leave this part of the country forever."

The brother said, "I will let you go."

They parted and the next morning the young man went back to his village and told the people what had happened and said, "You can fish in the lake as much as you like; no one will trouble you."

And so it proved.

The Moose Woman

A YOUNG MAN, who lived alone with his mother, decided that he would go to the forest and hunt; that he would stay away a year, collect and dry meat, and at the end of the year come home.

He started and after going a long distance, came to a region where he thought there would be plenty of game. He built a bark house and began housekeeping. Each morning he made a fire, cooked his breakfast and ate it, then went



out to hunt. He stayed away all day and when he came home at night, he was often so tired that he lay down without eating. He soon had a large quantity of meat but many times he was hungry.

One day, when coming back from a long tramp, he saw smoke rising from the smoke-hole of his cabin. He was frightened, for he was sure the cabin was on fire. He ran as fast as he could, thinking he might save some of the meat he had dried.

On going into the cabin he was surprised to see a fire in the fireplace and his kettle hanging on the crook in such a way as to keep its contents hot. He wondered who had come to cook for him. In all the time he had lived in the forest he had not found a cabin or seen a human being.

He saw that the deer he had brought home the evening before was dressed and hung up to dry; that wood had been brought in and piled up near the fire; that everything had been put in order and acorn bread made.

On the way home he had thought that he would lie down as soon as he got to the cabin, but now he was glad to find a warm meal awaiting him. He sat down and ate, thinking, "The person who got this ready will come soon," but no one came.

The next morning he went into the forest to hunt. When on the way home he looked to see if smoke was coming out of his cabin; it was, and again food was ready. Near the fire he found a partly finished braid. Then he knew that his unknown friend was a woman. She had put a number of deer skins to soak to make buckskin. He thought, "How kind she is," and he made up his mind to see her, even if he had to stop hunting.

In the morning he started off, as usual, but only went to a place in the woods where he could watch the cabin. Soon he saw smoke rising from the cabin, and, creeping back cautiously, he waited around till a woman came out for wood. When she went in he followed quickly.

He saw that the woman was young and good-looking and he said to her, "You have been kind to me, I am thankful."

She said, "I knew that you were often hungry

and I came to see if you would let me be your wife."

The young man was glad that the woman was willing to stay. After that she tanned deer skins, dried meat, cooked for him, and worked hard every day. She was good natured and kind and her husband loved her.

Before the end of the year a boy was born and then they were perfectly happy.

When the time came that the man had set to go back to his mother, his wife said, "I know your promise to your mother. The time has come for you to go. I have everything ready, I have made moccasins for you and for your mother, and there is plenty of meat."

"How can I carry the meat?" asked the man, "She lives a long way off."

"You have only to select the meat you want; I know how you can carry it."

She knew how he came to the forest, and that he could reach his village much quicker by going in a canoe down the river.

Early the next morning she asked him to go to the river with her--it was not far from the cabin. When they came to the bank, she took a tiny canoe from her bosom. Her husband wondered what she was going to do with such a little plaything.

"Take hold of one end of this," said the woman, "and pull away from me."

He did and the little canoe stretched and stretched till it was very long and wide. They placed it at the edge of the water, then brought basketful after basketful of meat from the cabin and packed it away in the canoe.

When the canoe was well loaded the woman gave her husband a package, and said, "I want you to put on a new pair of moccasins each morning and throw away the old ones."

Then she cautioned him not to forget her, said, "When people see what a good hunter you are, many women will want to marry you, but you must be true to me, if you are not you will never see me again."

The man promised to come back in the fall, and they parted.

When he reached home, news spread that such a woman's son had returned from a year's hunting and had brought a great deal of meat. People came to see him and to look at the meat. He told no one, not even his mother, that he was married, so many young girls asked for him. His mother had a nice looking girl whom she liked and she urged her son to marry her, but he refused.

After a while he said to his mother, "I am going to the woods again. I have a cabin there. Some time you will know why I don't marry the girl you have chosen for me."

When he reached the river, he shook the little canoe, as his wife had told him to do. It stretched out, but was not as large as before, for he had no meat to carry. He sat in the canoe and started up the river. When near his cabin, he saw his wife waiting for him and his little boy running around at play.

The husband and wife were very happy again. Another year went by and a second boy was born to them.

Again the woman got her husband ready to carry meat to his mother, she seemed to know that this time he wouldn't come back.

In parting she said to him, "If you marry another woman, you will never see me again, but if you love me and the children you will be true to us and come back. If you are not true, your new wife will soon be sucking her moccasins from hunger, for you will lose your power of killing game."

As before, the man's fame as a hunter brought many good looking girls to ask for him. Again his mother urged him to marry, but he refused and was ready to start for his cabin in the forest when a beautiful girl appeared in the village and came to his mother's house. His mother urged him to marry the girl and he yielded.

The wife in the forest knew what had happened, and she said to her children, "My children, we must go away from here. Your father doesn't love us."

The children were full of play and fun but they were troubled by their mother's tears, for the poor woman was always crying.

After the man had taken a second wife, the meat in his mother's house began to fall away strangely. He could almost see it disappear. Though there was a good supply when the woman came, in a few days but little was left. He went hunting, but couldn't kill anything, not even a rabbit. He went day after day; always the same luck--his power was gone.

One day when the man came home, he found his wife sucking her moccasins, she was so hungry. He cried and sobbed. "This is my punishment," thought he. "She warned me that this would happen if I were untrue to her." Right away he decided to go to his first wife and her children and never leave them again; and he started, without saying a word to his young wife or his mother.

When he reached his cabin in the forest, he found it covered with snow, not a single footprint was to be seen. He went in. The cabin was empty, but the children's moccasins were there and the sight of them made the father very sad. As he was hungry he looked around for food. Near the fireplace he saw three little mounds of ashes, the second smaller than the first, the third smaller than the second. He sat down and wondered what the mounds could mean, for he knew they had been made by his wife as a sign for him should he ever come to the cabin.

At last he made up his mind that he had three children, and he determined to find them.

"My boys," thought he, "are playful and as they followed their mother they must have hacked the trees."

When the mother and her children were starting away, the elder boy said, "We will mark the trail so if our father ever thinks of us and comes back he can follow us."

The woman said, "You mustn't do that, your father will not come back. He has another wife and will never think of his children in the forest."

But, as they traveled along and played by the way, the boys hacked trees and shot arrows,

and now their father was able to track them.

He found that after a day's journey his wife had camped. He saw the ashes of a fire and on a tree nearby four pairs of moccasins. He made a bundle of the moccasins and the next morning when he started off he carried the bundle on his arm.

Again he walked all day and again he found the ashes of a fire and found four pairs of moccasins. He was without food and was tired, but the next morning he traveled on. Toward night, as before, he found the ashes of a fire, and found four pairs of moccasins. He always put the moccasins in his bundle.

About noon the next day he saw, in the distance, a smoke, as from a cabin. He hurried on and as he came near the cabin he saw two boys playing, running around and shooting. They saw him and went into the cabin to tell their mother that a man was coming. She looked out, recognized her husband, and told the boys to stay inside and keep away from the man.

The man didn't know that the children were his own. He supposed they belonged to someone who lived in the cabin. As he was hungry he decided to go in and ask for food. As he entered the woman turned her back but the elder boy knew his father and running to him put his hand on his knee. The father didn't recognize the child so he gently pushed his hand away. The woman turned and saw the act.

"There," said she, "I told you to keep away from him, [and] that he didn't love you."

Now the man recognized his wife and he begged her to forgive him. He was so earnest and begged so hard that the woman forgave him and brought to him his little daughter whom he had never seen. Ever afterward the man was true to his wife, who, though she looked exactly like a woman, was of the Moose family. He never again left his home in the forest, and he and his family were happy.

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Michael Berman's published work includes *The Power of Metaphor* for Crown House.

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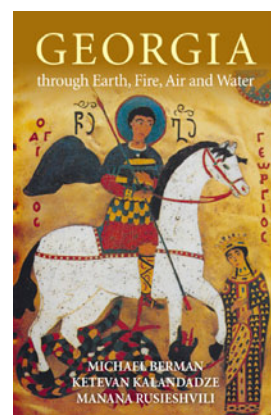
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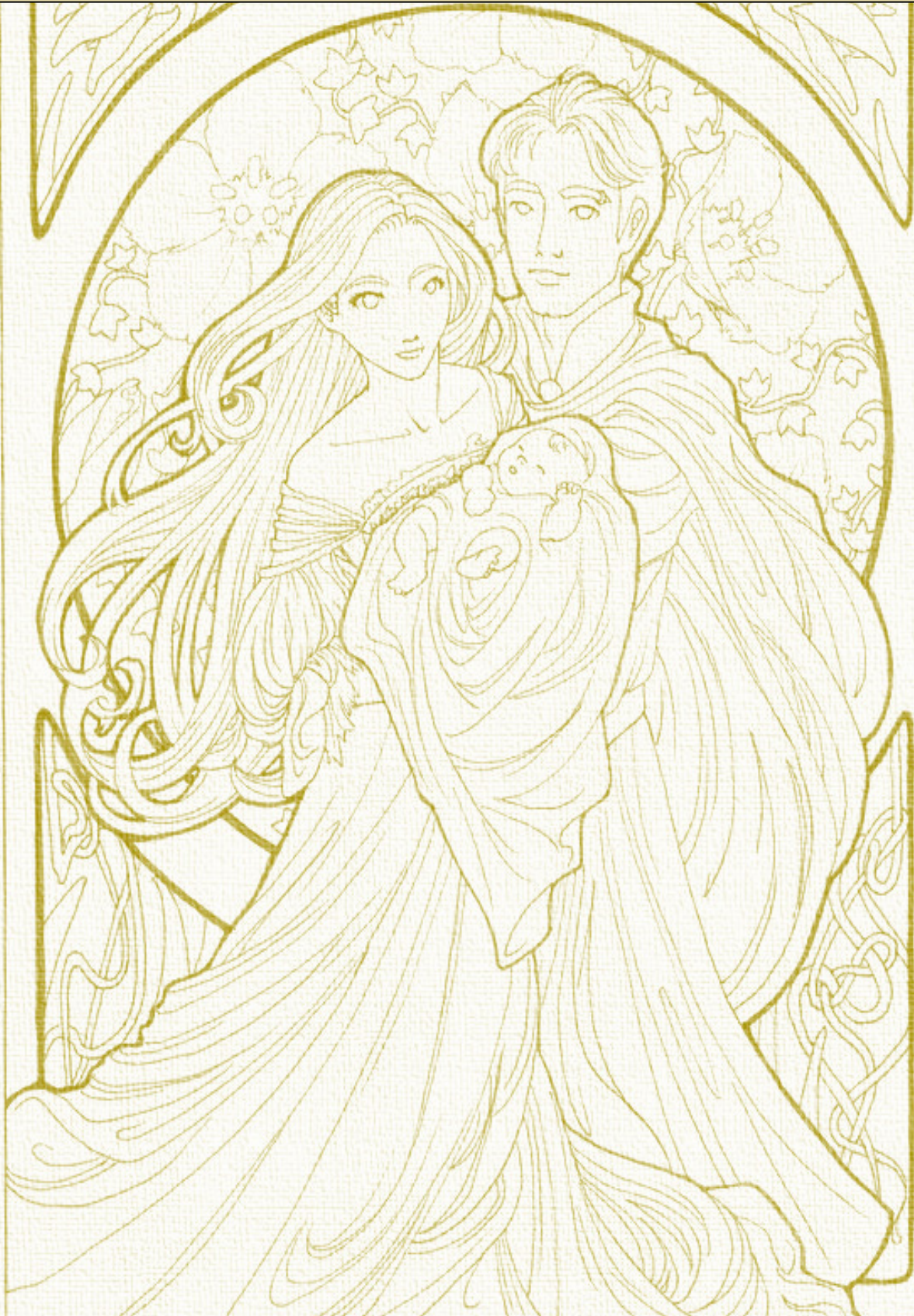
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With The Help of Our Gods



A Personal Story of Conception and Birth (Including a Heathen Naming Ceremony)
Larisa Hunter/Mist, Gyðja of Kenaz Kindred

In many religions the word faith is perhaps more concretely understood, faith is something that is for them a given aspect of what they practice, however for those practicing paganism and heathenism the word faith is a bit more complex than that. In many ways, faith is not so easily defined, nor is the reliance on 'gods' to be part of our world. I think that in many ways those who do not practice pagan or heathen religion would perhaps consider us even having the complete opposite of faith.

And yet, many of us devote lifetimes to the understanding and perfection of our beliefs. It was our faith that kept us sane during the process of conception and birth, and it was through faith that we learned that the power of our gods is not a mere legend but is in actual fact something that exists and is constant in the lives of those devoted to them. There is a quote that our kindred uses, that I find gives me a reminder of my faith on a daily basis, and perhaps it reminds me of the lessons I learned along the road that brought me to a place of accepting the existence of faith.

"Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation." - D. Elton Trueblood To be fortunate to have learned this lesson was a blessing, however it was not taught with the most gentle of hand, and perhaps shows that sometimes the road to achieve our desires is but one that is not forged by ease but brutally executed by wit and will alone.

Before I met and married my partner, with whom I have found my solace, I was in a place that I recall now was much like a prison. I was kept in a fortress of oppression and domestic abuse to which I was left experiencing a great deal of hardship. The relationship did not begin that way, in fact I recall moments of life with him as loving, and in fact thought that he was the one that I would marry. However, not having the gift of seeing the future perhaps limited me to see that there would be a way out of the situation that I found myself, and so I found a place deep inside myself to hide. I hid from the abuse, internalising it and formed a cocoon around myself that protected me from feeling any pain. I recall now, that in fact on many occasions I provoked the attacks, I have discovered once free, that the victims of abuse often do this, because for them it is a relief to be abused.

Mist, Gyðja of Kenaz Kindred, has been practicing Ásatrú for over nine years. After dedicating herself to the path, she created a kindred of her own: incorporating both spiritual experiences and historical practices into her teaching programs. Her rituals created a unique form of heathenry that allows for deep and meaningful connection with the gods. Mist lectures at many heathen and pagan festivals in Canada. She has also written for several other books. Most of her day is spent writing and caring for her toddler and running Kenaz Kindred.

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That is a strange thing for people to do, but apparently it happens, and I think that on numerous occasions I wanted to feel lower than dirt, it fit how I mentally saw myself after years of both physical and mental abuse. During these years, I think I would have done anything for a moment of solace, a moment of peace, a moment to feel alive and free. That moment came when a line was drawn as to what I should do about preventing pregnancy. It was not a real decision or option but more of you do this or else moment and I decided to protect myself was the much easier and safer option. I went to my OB-GYN and he told me that I could have a 'simple' procedure to clip my fallopian tubes. I had the operation mostly to save myself further risk of abuse, at least that is what I told myself, however this changed nothing, and I was left 'void' and alone and possibly childless for the rest of my life. I wish I could say that decision was smart, or in any way sensible, but it was not. I don't think many except those in situations like this would understand what a person's mind has to convince them to do.

I felt that I would never be free of my prison and never find a sense of love and belonging, but something happened one day that would change all of that. It is kind of ironic now looking back, and perhaps I should have seen it coming, but who can have such foresight into their own future. I had been given a set of runes from my ex, and one day I decided to do a

reading for myself, now in all honestly I knew nothing about runes, and had to sit there with a rune book analysing each rune that feel and trying to make sense of a practice that was foreign to me. I don't know why I decided to do that, nor do I really understand why this one singular act changed my life, but that is what it did. I vividly remember that the reading indicated that I would meet my sexual and spiritual equal, and that this meeting would be soon, at first I sort of disregarded this reading, as who was I to grasp the meaning of stones that I barley had any education on, and frankly it seemed to close to those fortune tellers who love to tell you about the 'tall dark stranger' that will appear just when you least expect him too. I am very much a realist, and found that I did not take to heart what these little symbols said, and decided to resolve myself to the fact that my life in this hellish prison would be never-ending.

But, the fates I think had a different idea of what my life would be. My sister came to visit one summer and she offered to take me to an event in Acton known as the Renaissance Fair. It was an event that occurred every year, and I was excited to be able to go with my sister, for some reason my warden let me go, and for some reason he decided to stay home, I am not sure why that was, it was completely unprecedented for him to do that, but I was free and had my first taste of what it was like outside my cage.

My sister was great, and we spent time shopping and sightseeing, she had my little niece with her, so it was nice to be in the company of a little babe that I could hold and spend time with, despite the fact of deciding to do the surgery, I very much wanted to be a mother. From the time I was small, the thoughts of this one act consumed me and I remember that caring for my two younger sisters was actually something that I considered fun. I recall being a big help to my mother by feeding and rocking the babies in the house, and loved it.

So, to have this option taken from me did in many ways kill me inside. A piece of me was taken, and it was something that I to this day regret ever allowing someone to force upon me. During this outing we met up with some old friends of my sisters, and again the fates showed their hand, for the friends that she met with happened to be a couple that I recognized, it then occurred to me that the man in the rela-

tionship was in fact my high school friend. It was so wonderful to converse with someone who actually listened to me, and to be honest, yes I flirted a little. Okay, it was innocent flirting but flirting none the less, we reminisced about life in high school and did in fact exchange emails.

After a few one sided emails (from me) I kind of put thoughts of ever reconnecting with him. But, then one day out of the blue, I received an email that he was free for coffee, and during that I discovered that he had separated. We began meeting for coffee and talking, and I remember on one occasion having to sneak out of my prison to meet him, in many ways it was something out of a tawdry romance novel. We had to meet in secret being very careful where we met, because at the time having a friend was almost impossible let alone a male friend, if I had been discovered I would have surely been beaten even worse.

I don't remember telling him much about the abuse, but I think he sensed that something was not right. Our meetings became more frequent and something in me began to see that I could have the chance for something that I thought only existed in dreams, that I could in fact have love. Our relationship was crossing lines and I began to feel that I loved him very much, and simultaneously began almost reviling the touch of my ex. I cannot say that this went unnoticed. There were times when I thought I would get caught, he even took my phone which was the only way of communicating with my new found love, and I began wondering how long I could keep this up.

One day, for whatever reason, I had something snap inside me. The night before I had been forced to have sex with Mr. ex and felt this sudden pang of guilt, I felt that I had betrayed my new love, this one switch in my brain helped me push myself to do what was needed. It was not at all simple to leave a life behind, but I found that I could not run faster if I tried. All my desires led with this new found man, I was drawn deeply to him, and I was bound and determined to escape my prison, and there I was at last, outside of my cage, unbound and free.

It was my new love who found me a place to live, and we began life together very quickly, I think that for most the quick leap into a new relationship after escaping the one I was in would seem unthinkable, but for some reason the

memories of the prison quickly faded, as life in the free embrace of someone who loved me, quickly mended the broken spirit that I had been left with.

My new found relationship was something that to me is something that is hard to define. I loved and still love him more than anything I have ever loved (outside of our daughter, but I will get to her in a bit) and he was just to me at least, something that was so much part of me, that I could not imagine anything else more perfect, he is for me a part of my soul and could not have been created any more perfectly by the gods, it seemed that the rune reading had come true, and here was the love that I had almost given up hoping for.

I cannot say how long our relationship went before we discussed marriage, I actually did not believe in a conventional relationship and was content with living together. For me, marriage was not something that I sought after, but for him it was something he wanted, he wanted to be more than just common law, he wanted to be bonded together, and felt that marriage was just that, a bond between two. We were both identifying as pagan, of no particular group and or path, just floundering in the ether so to speak. We found ourselves in charge of a group of individuals whom also were seeking understanding and founded a little group of explorers that later identified themselves as Wiccan. We studied Wicca for some time and suddenly were thrust into the position of group officials.

I cannot say I know why it is some are driven to priesthood, but it seems that it has a lot to do with the ability they have to learn and also to teach. We spent a number of years doing that, and also at the same time finding ourselves drawn to various parts of our province, we moved at least four times in the first few years, including a move to the isolated North which meant we were cut off from the world so to speak. Here we had a chance to establish a new life, and had a few crisis along the way, including some results from doctors that indicated that I had fibromyalgia from the years of abuse.

Eventually, we found our way back to the greener and warmer climates of Central Ontario, and began to have more interest from others who wanted to study paganism with us; this eventually led in us taking a more active role in finding

community. We attended a pagan festival in Hamilton, Ontario and here had our first real exposure to heathenry. I had heard about it before, and had some strange things happen to me that were leading me in the direction that Wiccan might not be for me. I had the appearance of gods on several occasions, in particular one with one eye. At the time, I really had no idea who that was, and kind of fluffed it off as no more than an odd occurrence.

But, upon meeting these heathens and talking with them, I decided to do some research. It was a bit daunting at first, especially walking up to a heathen priest and asking them about a dream you have, but they were exceptionally nice to me, and in fact gave me some tips where to go and what to look for. My research ended up revealing a god named Odin, and from that spiraled into a nine yearlong devotion to a group of gods that I would take as friends, companions and more. After much research and exploration, I found myself taking the final profession ritual to Asatru. For those not aware of heathenry, profession is the final ritual in which a person takes an oath of allegiance of sorts to the religion of Asatru and its gods. This started my path towards priesthood, to which I am proud to say to this day I am grateful for and continually learning. Our life as leaders of a kindred began as a road of uncertainty, but for some reason a number of people were drawn to us.

We were one of the few heathen practitioners in the area, and I think the novelty helped a lot. We presented at a number of different groups and at a number of festivals, it seemed as if the gods were telling us that we were on the right track. Then things in my dream life began to shift. I started to dream about children. But, things were not going to be that easy. We had a slight problem that would not be that easy to deal with.

Outside of our spiritual life, my life dealing with abuse was still ongoing, I had begun healing myself through counselling and was beginning to finally let go of the years of pain and anger that I felt. During our relationship I found out from my mother, about a special program in Ontario that helped compensate victims of crimes, she thought that this would help resolve things for me in the form of providing closure for everything. I went with hope in my heart; some

closure could provide me a final way for me to let all this go. I had to retell the years of abuse, the things he did, the surgery, all of it, and relieving that was very difficult.

But, at the end of the day, it was worth it. I remember that the tribunal to which I sat in front of asked me if I would rather go to school or have the ability to have children, and I remember just saying I wanted some piece of myself back. I spent six months waiting for a response and then a few months later a wonderful letter arrived, not only was I given compensation for the years of abuse through a fund that would help me gain some semblance of life, but there was a special letter included that said, they would help pay for the restoration of my fertility. This letter was a gift that I would never be able to express the gratitude for. I found myself then searching for a clinic that would be able to reverse my tubal clips.

The dreams continued to plague me, a child kept coming into my mind, the gods even telling me that it would be a girl, and born on an Odin's day. We began to wonder what these dreams meant and often thought of life as parents. I found a fertility clinic and went there with the highest of hopes. The tests on me were relatively painless and after a few blood tests and exams I was found to have perfectly working ovaries, this meant that getting the ability to conceive back might be a fairly uncomplicated one; however life again was to throw in another twist. The surgery would be risky and possibly not achieve the desired results, but, we had little options, although the fertility clinic advised us that we would be better to use 'IVF' (Procedure, used to overcome infertility, in which eggs are removed from a woman, fertilized with sperm outside the body, and inserted into the uterus of the same or another woman. IVF includes extraction of eggs, collection of sperm, fertilization in culture, and introduction into the uterus at the eight-cell stage. In a successful procedure, the embryo is implanted in the uterine wall, and pregnancy begins)

We decided to go with the surgical option for a few reasons, one that we did not fully feel that IVF was right for us, having researched it and finding that IVF had a lot of potentially bad things that could happen, and in all honesty despite the fact that we had no reason to think this way, we felt that if our gods wanted us to have a

child then they would help us find a way, that we did not have to put faith in science but instead with the spiritual. It is kind of funny that for heathens whom are vastly removed from any Christian thought that the option to put one's fate in the hands of the gods was first in our hearts and minds. With all the hopes in the world, I prepared myself for surgery.

The surgery went very well and I recovered quickly. But this was not the end of our rough road. My husband had to go for his tests too. I have to say, although I am not male, it has to be the most impossible and awkward situation to have to donate sperm into a cup. I could not believe how many constraints were on the collection of this specimen. The clinic had very strict delivery times and thus gave him only one hour to give his specimen and drop it off for testing. Our follow up appointment was met with trepidation as we waited patiently in the waiting room to find out the results. The doctor came in, and with bated breath we waited to find out our results. The news was one of the most hearts breaking moments. The doctor told us that we would have little to no chance at conceiving a child, and our best bet was IVF, we left the doctor's office in a daze, I think we were both in shock. To go through all this for nothing, was the hardest thing in the world to hear. We drove home and found ourselves crying over the results. I remember feeling very angry at the gods; in fact I believe I even cursed at Odin several times in the car, I felt betrayed, angry and frankly almost felt like I had picked the wrong gods and religion.

I don't know why my first inclination was to blame them, it certainly was no fault of the gods, but anger being an irrational moment does not always lead to the best of conditions nor the best mind. I remember feeling so hurt, that I was sick with pain. I went to bed that night with a fury of thoughts, and whom should show up but he to whom I was so ready to reject. Odin came that night, and taught me the most valuable of lessons, for he is both a god of compassion and yet of fear and rage. I recall that night as being one that is still pivotal in my life, for this too would drive me further into exploring my own religion and finding my future patron goddess, on this night I learned that those brave enough to voice rage to the gods, should in turn prepare for this rage to be returned upon themselves with words that will feel

as painful as razors and as stinging as needles. He showed me and told me that I was but a peon in the world, and that I had no right to demand things from him. He told me quite frankly and in no uncertain terms, that things would happen when they decided and not me. Despite my own wishes or desires they would make things happen when they were supposed to and I would have little to say about when and where that would be.

I learned that putting ones faith in the gods is sometimes more difficult than it sounds, and perhaps becoming a priest (which I was doing) seemed to come with a series of challenges including the loss of ones ego, learning the difference between slavery and servitude and frankly even though most heathens out there don't talk about these things as part of the religion of Ásatrú, they seem to be woven into every experience. I learned from this particular experience that I should always have faith that my gods will be there, and that I should trust that when they tell me something it will happen just not as quickly as I would like it.

The gods taught me that humility was essential and that IF I wanted them to bless my life and work with me that I would have to give something that I think most of us would resist giving, my entire trust, I would have to surrender my will and let them decide things for me. Of course, I would have a say in what happened to me, this was not completely a form of slavery but it was a balance of knowing when to let them take control and when for me too, and this time they would be the best and most knowledgeable about the timing and creation of this new being whom yet had been created.

After a few months, life began to creep in and take over and we left the child planning with the gods, until one ritual in which we were honouring Ingvi-Frey. Now, for those who don't know much about the Ásatrú gods, Frey is known for his large and well erect phallus, although praised for his fertility as an agricultural deity and not exactly for conception, one would surmise that this depiction of him also represents the act of conception or at least of male potency. The ritual involved my husband asking Frey for his blessing, in fact the whole ritual that day seemed to involve some strange things, including the Ingwaz rune, again depicting male potency being drawn twice when my husband drew runes and I drew Berkano a rune that rep-

resents birth twice as well. The whole day seemed to be a very odd one. Still the feeling that a child would never be ours, lingered. In fact, I recall that my nightly visions changed from following Odin to following Frigga (his wife and patron of women and the home) in which she kept telling me the child would be conceived in the spring, in the spring.

Well February 14th, 2008 came and on that day we decided to hell with it, let's not use protection and just 'see' what happens. Well I guess the gods must have been listening; I noticed that I was late and that was when I went out to get a pregnancy test. I was surprised to find out that I was in fact pregnant, I think it was the only time I have ever seen my partner look a bit 'scared' and yet I know inside we were both busting! I think I must have called everyone that day to tell them, and these calls were received with much excitement and anticipation.

We went back to the fertility clinic, with an in your face attitude and told them what happened, we decided that we would probably go with a doctor in town as our fertility doctor was over an hour and a half away, and that was a bit far if we were in labour! We returned home and began to dream. I began looking for doctors, to find out that our particular town had a backlog of patience waiting for OBGYN's. I am in Canada, so our medical system is vastly different than most countries, and specialists like OBGYN's are only available if you get 'referred' from your own doctor and if they are taking patience, sometimes if they are experience a high volume of patience it can take months. I decided that I would rather not wait, and found out that Canada just began allowing midwives to be the 'primary' care providers, which meant that they would pay for midwives to deliver your baby. In some countries I know that midwives are standard practice and in fact work with the doctors and nurses, in Canada we are just beginning to allow natural medicine into our health care system, so midwives were still considered (even though they were covered) as kind of untraditionally, somewhat hippy heath care.

Many of our family members in fact discouraged midwives as they seemed in the same boat as us, we did not really know enough about what they did to determine if they were a good choice. I think many of us are raised to think that babies are born in hospitals that this

is normal practice and any other person than a doctor was not qualified. But, I decided not only because there was no other option but because I wanted to see what they would offer to go and at least check out the midwife clinic.

I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the midwives both had medical training in fact a lot of medical training that they were willing to allow us to have the birth the way we wanted, that they would not do anything medically unnecessary and took great care and consideration answering our questions. I was a bigger girl, being 5'6" and about 280 pounds at pregnancy and therefore considered 'obese' but the midwives never gave me any reason to be concerned about my size in fact commenting that the bigger girls can push better and have more ability to distribute the weight of a baby, I felt confident with them both and did become very close to our student midwife who even attended our house after completion of care to visit our baby. For nine months I was cared for and in fact had many conversations about our wishes. One of the things we asked for was to wait nine days after birth in order to give our child a name; they were very compassionate about our religious requests and in fact had no problem with me using runes drawn on with washable marker or us having religious objects in the delivery room. It was nice to have one's personal religious views considered in this way, and made us feel very secure with them as our caretakers.

We had some options when it came to where we would deliver our baby, at home or at the hospital. As it was our first and we had no experience with what labour would be like other than the usual horror stories that some moms seem to relay in graphic detail, and due to the fact that we had a dog and two cats that would have to go somewhere during labour, we opted for the hospital. In truth, we thought that this option would give us the best of both worlds, we would have our midwives present, but we would also be in a place that if a medical emergency occurred we would be able to have the needed help.

The whole pregnancy was actually pleasant, although close to the end, I would have done anything to get that baby out! We were about two weeks overdue and getting overly anxious, I remember that our midwives told me that if we went another week, we would have to look at

having a C-section and that was just something that I wanted to avoid at all costs.

We went for a check-up at the hospital with the midwives and they asked me if I wanted to have a special drink, I don't know what they put in it, but that day I noticed that my back hurt a lot. I think that when you read the whole what to expect during labour the descriptions of the signs of labour are vague at best, the whole description of period like cramps meant little to me, I was one of those women that either had period cramps or didn't and to recall how and where it hurt during cramps when all you can think about is the baby coming, is not exactly brought to the forefront of one's mind.

I remember that my husband frantically got into gear. The hospital bag was at the door, and a phone call was put into the midwives and to his employer. The first hours were a bit blurry for me; I remember that it went slowly! We began labour on the 18th of November 2008 and it had just started to snow, I remember climbing the three flights of stairs to the midwife clinic to be told that we could expect a long labour, as we were only a centimeter dilated. They told us to go for a walk and then meet them at the hospital for check in. So off we went, I remember walking up and down the block for half an hour before we got tired and cold. I remember that despite all my wishes to keep moving, I could not help but feel tired, like I wanted to sleep. But, we went and checked in and got all settled. We had arranged for a very good friend and kindred member to be with us at the hospital and she arrived within the first few hours. I remember that we had a very comfortable room at the hospital, and there was a 'dad' bed for hubby to sleep in. Our friend had to sleep in a very tight little cozy that was so small she had to sleep folded almost, I felt so bad for her, but she stuck with us to the end, and it was nice to actually have her with us.

I don't really have many memories of what happened, it was all so fuzzy. We took a long time to get going and I remember the midwife coming to break my water after a few hours, and then still nothing, then the OBGYN on duty came in and broke more water, and still nothing. I remember that we had a notification of meconium present. We were told that intervention might be needed and recommended strongly that we have an epidural and prepare

for a caesarian. I remember feeling so nervous! The doctors at hospitals seem to treat you strangely when you have midwives. We were told that the baby was over nine pounds and that it would be impossible to have a vaginal birth, but our midwives kept me strong, and assured me that women had given birth to far bigger babies and not to listen to them, if we had to have intervention we had time.

After twelve hours we were told that we would probably have to have an epidural. I was not in pain at all, but the doctors and midwives told me that they would like to give me Pitocin which brings on contractions and that without the epidural even the strongest of women would need some pain management. So, I reluctantly agreed! I felt it was best to do what was best for the baby and gave over to allowing whatever needed to happen, happen. We then were notified that because of the presence of meconium the neo-natal unit would be on call! There is nothing more frightening than being told there is something wrong with your delivery, that the baby might be at risk and to feel dread and fear! I also recall that the OBGYN on duty for the morning shift was the worst doctor I had ever had the unfortunate pleasure of meeting. She told me as I was in labour that I was ridiculous to hope that I could birth this baby without a caesarian, that I should have had a diabetes test, and that my baby was big and I remember comments about my size as well, I am not a waif of a girl, but a stocky woman with curves! I actually think that my size made carrying a child easier and gave me extra muscles that could help push! But, having those midwives holding my hand the whole time I think kept me sane and calm. I remember that I slept for a while, although, the nurses kept turning me to monitor the baby and it was uncomfortable.

At nine am on the 19th, I remember being told that we were fully dilated and we should get ready to push! I remember falling asleep and then woke up at around ten am, and started to push, I don't remember anything other than a drive to get that baby out.

Suddenly out she came, perfect and beautiful! I never in my wildest dreams knew that I could love something that much and it was a glorious experience to hold her and see her there at last. All my dreams and hopes in life, my faith in my gods had resulted in the gift of a lifetime, a

beautiful baby girl. She was born on November 19th, 2008 at 10:03am and was a healthy 9pounds 1 ounce! She was the most precious and beautiful baby in the world (which is I am sure what all parents think)

What started out uncertain and unknowing turned out to be an experience of a lifetime! It ended with the blessing of a child, who was named in a heathen ceremony. In Asatru we have a ritual known as the Vatni Ausa, it is performed on the ninth day of birth and this is when a baby gets their official name. "In the Vatni Ausa rite, a child is formally accepted by its father on its ninth night of life, and sprinkled with water made sacred by Blots, and given a name. Of course, in the modern day, most children will typically have "mainstream" names and a separate name by which they are known in the Asatru faith-community." (Unknown, 2008)

For those who have not seen or read a blot like this, I thought I would share the ritual that we wrote. I hope that the ritual shows how much we love and honour our gods and how grateful we are for our daughter. All in all, this road for me has not ended, and every day that I look at our beautiful daughter I am reminded of the gift that has been given to me. She is to me the best parts of us, a shining reminder of how life is precious and a gift from the gods.

At her naming, our entire kindred was there including our friend who stayed with us during the labour, it was such a lovely experience to name her in our tradition and to this day we continue to teach her the ways of Asatru, in many ways she inspires me to continue my spiritual path, and reminds me of the power of the gods.

I hope that the ritual below shows not only our spiritual devotion but also our love of this little girl, who now at the age of three is a spectacular little adventurer who loves to dance, loves to laugh and spends her nights still wanting a little snuggle before she sleeps. Truly, she is more than I could have ever dreamed of, and for that I am forever grateful to the gods.

Ritual

Gyðja: Fé, Vit, Friðr, Grið, Heill. (Fay, Veet, Freeth, Greeth, Hayl)
 Goði: Wealth, Wisdom, Harmony, Security and Health ¹

HAMMER RITE

Gyðja: Hamarr i Norðri helga vé thetta ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer in the North, hallow and hold this holy stead

Gyðja: Hamarr i Austri, Helga vé thetta ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer in the East, hallow and hold this holy stead

Gyðja: Hamarr i Suðri Helga vé thetta ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer in the South, hallow and hold this holy stead

Gyðja: Hamarr i Vestri, Helga vé thetta ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer in the West, hallow and hold this holy stead

Gyðja: Hamarr yfir (ifir) mer Helga ve thetta ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer over me, hallow and hold this holy stead

Gyðja: Hamarr undir mer Helga ve ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer under me, hallow and hold this holy-stead

Gyðja: Hamarr Helga ve theta ok hald vörð
 Goði: Hammer, hallow and hold this holy stead

Gyðja: Um meik ok I mer Ásgarð ok Miðgarð
 Goði: Around me and in me, Ásgarð and Miðgarð ²

Gyðja: I hallow and make holy to the service of the gods. Gods of the ÁEsir, Vanir and Jötunn purify this harrow and stead, banishing all influences unholy or impure. In this hallowed place our minds will be hallowed as is our determination to serve the gods and goddess of Ásatrú ³

GENERAL BLESSING

BOTH: Hail to the álf, all ringed round us, the fathers of the folk.
 Hail to the díses, all ringed round us, the mothers of our might.
 Hail to our kin, in the hidden lands, hail the ancestors on this holy day

The children of earth call out to the ÁEsir and Vanir.
 Hear us, eldest and brightest.

To all you shining and deep ones, wisest and mightiest, cunning and fair, loving and comforting, gods and goddesses, we offer you welcome.

To the gods and goddesses of this place, ancient and powerful, known to us or unknown, gods of this place, we offer you welcome.

To all the deities of those here gathered, you whom we worship, you who bless our lives, o patrons and matrons, we offer you welcome.

So, high ones, we call to you as our elders, in reverence and love, to join in our magic.

Come to our fire, Æsir and Vanir; meet us at the boundary. Guide and ward us as we walk the elder ways.⁴

Goði: Tonight, we have come together to welcome a new life into our kindred and community. On this night, we offer special blots to the gods. As each blot is given we ask that their blessings be bestowed upon this child and on her mother and myself.

Gyðja: "To Odin, chief of the Æsir and master of runes we pour this offering and ask for wisdom and guidance on the child, wrist over her protective symbols to aid her in walking the path of life.

To Frigga, wife of Odin and mother of gods we pour this offering and ask for you to guide her in the ways of women, impart onto her the ancient knowledge of feminine power and teach her to walk her path with strength, honour and dignity."⁵

"To the Disir, we pour this offering we ask that a Fylgja-Dis or a protecting spirit attach itself to the child and follow her through her life, protecting her from harm. May this spirit be one that teaches her the wonders of life, watches her grow, and remains with her for the remainder of her days.

Goði: To Thor god of thunders, we ask for protection from the designs and baneful powers of Ill-wights. We ask that your hammer watch over her, when we cannot and that you will strike those who seek her harm with one mighty blow."⁶

"To Sif, goddess of the harvest, we pour this offering and ask that you teach this child to be a good woman, someday a wife and hopefully a mother. Patience with Loki and the ability to stand her ground when required. Teach her beauty within so that she always sees herself as we do...a beautiful and wonderful person."⁷

"To the Earth Mother we ask for health for the child, walk with her along this path, hand in hand. Teach her to respect that which she has and show her the value of land and its bounty."⁸

-Each time a Blot is done a few drops of the consecrated ale are sprinkled into the water that will later be used to sprinkle the child-

Sources

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3. Adapted from: Hammerstead Blot Book: <http://home.earthlink.net/~jordsvin/Blots/Index.htm> , various rituals
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5. Modified version of ritual texts provided by: Cauldron Born: Asatru, Folklore, and the Old Religious Traditions of Northern Europe: "Vatni Ausa": <http://cauldronborn.blogspot.com/2007/08/vatni-ausa.html>
6. Cauldron Born: Asatru, Folklore, and the Old Religious Traditions of Northern Europe: "Vatni Ausa": <http://cauldronborn.blogspot.com/2007/08/vatni-ausa.html>
7. ©Larisa C Pole aka Mist, Gyðja of Kenaz Kindred
8. Cauldron Born: Asatru, Folklore, and the Old Religious Traditions of Northern Europe: "Vatni Ausa": <http://cauldronborn.blogspot.com/2007/08/vatni-ausa.html>

This rite was much inspired and created with the help of:
<http://cauldronborn.blogspot.com/2007/08/vatni-ausa.html>

Blot One

Goði: Odin, Fimbultyr, Galdrsfadhír, Hangatyr, Allfadhír Odin
 Master of runes,
 Known by many names and many guises,
 Shaper of the world in ancient times, come and hallow this gathering with your might.

Before you stands a father with a daughter newly born,
 Let her offspring be blessed,
 Let all of her days be blessed.
 Guide her, father most wise and protect her from unwise council.

-The horn is filled and handed to the Goði, who marks it with the hammer sign and with the ANSUZ sign, and holds it up-

Odin accept this horn of ale as a true and hallowed sacrifice. Receive It. Fill it with your might.

-lower the horn and give it a hammer sign, take a sip. Walk to each participant and take it around so that all may have a sip. Pour the remainder into the offering bowl and blessing water.-

- Goði & Gyðja makes a silent prayer to Odin and sprinkles themselves with the mixed water and then walks to each participant saying the below, sprinkling them with some of the mixed water-

Goði: (NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), Under Odin's Eye, I blood you wise and protected.

-after all are blessed take the remaining horn liquid back to the harrow and pour it into the blessing bowl with the following statement:-

Hail to the Gods, Hail to the Goddess, Hail Earth who gives to all

Blot Two

Gyðja: Frigga, High Wife,
 Mother of many gods, keeper of secrets,
 Great Lady of feminine virtues,

 Before you stands a mother, with a daughter newly born,
 Let her offspring be blessed,
 Let all of her days be blessed.
 Guide her, mother most wise and protect her from

-The horn is filled and handed to the Goði, who marks it with the hammer sign and with the Perthro sign, and holds it up-

Frigga, accept this horn of ale as a true and hallowed sacrifice. Receive it. Fill it with your might.

-lower the horn and give it a hammer sign, take a sip. Walk to each participant and take it around so that all may have a sip. Pour the remainder into the offering bowl and blessing water.-

- Goði & Gyðja makes a silent prayer to Frigga and sprinkles themselves with the mixed water and then walks to each participant saying the below, sprinkling them with some of the mixed water-

Gyðja: (NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), In the name of Frigga, I blood you good health, good fate and a home of peace and harmony.

Blot Three

Gyðja: Disir of the family hunter
 Disir of the family pole
 Fetch-ancestress
 Warding wights of men's lives
 Shield maidens, Luck bringers
 with these words we call you forth, come and hallow this gathering with your might.

See there, the daughter of Larisa and Tim, Mist and Kol,
 those of you who will weave her good fate
 A safe and happy life, attach yourself to her and follow her all her days.
 Do this in the name of wyrd the mighty
 By the force of the spinning Norn's
 In the name of the gods, and the earth that gives to all.

-The horn is filled and handed to the Goði, who marks it with the hammer sign and with the Algiz sign, and holds it up-

Disir, accept this horn of ale as a true and hallowed sacrifice. Receive it; fill it with your might.

-lower the horn and give it a hammer sign, take a sip. Walk to each participant and take it around so that all may have a sip. Pour the remainder into the offering bowl and blessing water.-

- Goði & Gyðja makes a silent prayer to the Disir and sprinkles themselves with the mixed water and then walks to each participant saying the below, sprinkling them with some of the mixed water-

Gyðja: (NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), In the name of the Clan-Mothers, I blood you lucky and protected.

Blot Four

Goði: Asa-Thor, Thunderer,
 Red beard, Midgard's Warder,
 Sif's beloved, son of Odin,
 With these words your younger kin call you forth,
 Come and hallow this gathering with your might.

Before you stand a father with a daughter newly born,
 Let her offspring be blessed,
 Let all of her days be blessed,
 Asa-Thor, keep her safe from the designs of wicked wights,
 Keep her safe every day of her life

-The horn is filled and handed to the Goði, who marks it with the hammer sign and with the Thurisaz sign, and holds it up-

Thunderer, accept this horn of ale as a true and hallowed sacrifice. Receive it. Fill it with your might.

-lower the horn and give it a hammer sign, take a sip. Walk to each participant and take it around so that all may have a sip. Pour the remainder into the offering bowl and blessing water.-

- Goði & Gyðja makes a silent prayer to Thor and sprinkles themselves with the mixed water and then walks to each participant saying the below, sprinkling them with some of the mixed water-

Goði: (NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), under the hammer of the Thunder God, I blood you warded and safe.

Blot Five

Gyðja: Sif, goddess of the harvest,
 Thor's beloved flaxened haired beauty,
 She who wards the hallowed halls of Thor's mighty palace,
 With these words, we call you forth,
 Come and hallow this gathering with your strength and might
 Before you stands a mother, with a daughter newly born,
 Let her offspring be blessed,
 Let all of her days be blessed,

Sif, teach her the gift of inner strength and to know herself, show her the beauty of life and the cycles of the harvest so that she may know when to honour the gods of our people.

-The horn is filled and handed to the Goði, who marks it with the hammer sign and with the Sowilo sign, and holds it up-

Sif, accept this horn of ale as a true and hallowed sacrifice. Receive it. Fill it with your might.

-lower the horn and give it a hammer sign, take a sip. Walk to each participant and take it around so that all may have a sip. Pour the remainder into the offering bowl and blessing water.-

- Goði & Gyðja makes a silent prayer to Sif and sprinkles themselves with the mixed water and then walks to each participant saying the below, sprinkling them with some of the mixed water-

Gyðja: (NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), With the Scythe of Sif, I blood you blessed in the bounty of her grace.

Goði: We ask the Jötunn to ward and protect our child,

Blot Six

Teach her your ancient wisdom, the knowledge of the rocks and stones, the water and the air, the elements around us and in us,

Show her that you are not our enemies but our friends and that you know great and powerful things. Show her to respect our elders and to honour everyone regardless of their origin...teach her that the beings in the Nine Worlds are alive and exist and that they can be helpful in our daily lives.

(NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), with the ancient powers of the ancestral Jötunn, I blood you blessed in the wise counsel of the ancient powers

Gyðja: We ask the Vanir to ward and protect our child,

Teach her the ways of the fertile fields, the growing plants and the nature of the world around her. Show her the beauty of the earth and its bounty from the green lush fields to the autumn coloured forests. Show her that the gods of the earth are alive in the winds, and the waters, the depths of the mountains and the shallow plains of the earth.

Show her that the land must be honoured and teach her the ways of the hunter, the farmer, the life of the land and the ability to know the secrets of ancient and powerful knowledge that you guard.

(NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), with the ancient powers of the Vanir, I blood you blessed by the Vanir, the gods of the harvest, of time, of light, love, oceans and magic.

Goði: Finally, to all those in the Nine Worlds that seek to aid this child, we ask you to bless her with your gifts. Teach her your wisdom, council her in the ways of our people and tell her the stories of her ancestors both past and future. Embrace her with your protective powers and show her the greatness of our beloved gods.

(NAME-of the person you are standing in front of), by the powers dwelling in the mighty tree, I blood you blessed

Gyðja: I, Mist also known as Larisa Hunter before the gods and my kindred acknowledge you as my daughter

Goði: I, Kol also known as Tim Hunter before the gods and my kindred acknowledge you as my daughter

Parental Vows

Gyðja:

I, Mist/Larisa your mother vow to love you with all my heart, to protect you always from those who would seek you harm. I promise to never hate you, to never cause you intentional pain. I promise and vow to give you the best possible life, by any means necessary. I vow to teach you our ways, though never to force you into living them. I vow to show you the path, but never force you to walk it.

I will always and forever be with you, no matter where you are. I will always be proud of you, no matter what you decide to become. I will forever be in your debt for giving me such a wonderful gift.

In your arms, I am humbled and have been shown a great and wonderful experience. To be your mother, is a truly wonderful thing, and I can never thank you enough for choosing me. With all the love in my heart, I welcome you to a family of love and devotion and wish upon you the greatest possible life.

Goði:

I Tim, your loving father, vow to protect and love you with all that I am. I will show you the world; introduce you to the things that are most important in it; Love, Family, Friendships, Honor, and Respect to name a few. I will watch over you, as you grow into the beautiful woman that I know you will. I will be ever mindful of your needs and wants, caring for you with every fiber of my being.

You have blessed us with your arrival, and in the short time you have been with us, everything has brightened. I vow to brighten every day for you as you have for me.

I vow to teach you all that I know in this world, and to learn new things with you at every opportunity.

I will keep you in my heart and in my thoughts at all times, and I will always love you.

-SPECIAL NOTATION ABOUT THIS RITUAL-

All the text appearing in purple italics were taken from: *Cauldron Born: Asatru, Folklore, and the Old Religious Traditions of Northern Europe*: "Vatni Ausa": <http://cauldronborn.blogspot.com/2007/08/vatni-ausa.html>

Additional gods/goddess added as per our personal relationships with the gods using the format from the above ritual and modified for each of the extra gods/goddess invited.



Convergence of Catastrophes
Guillaume Faye
Arktos (2012)

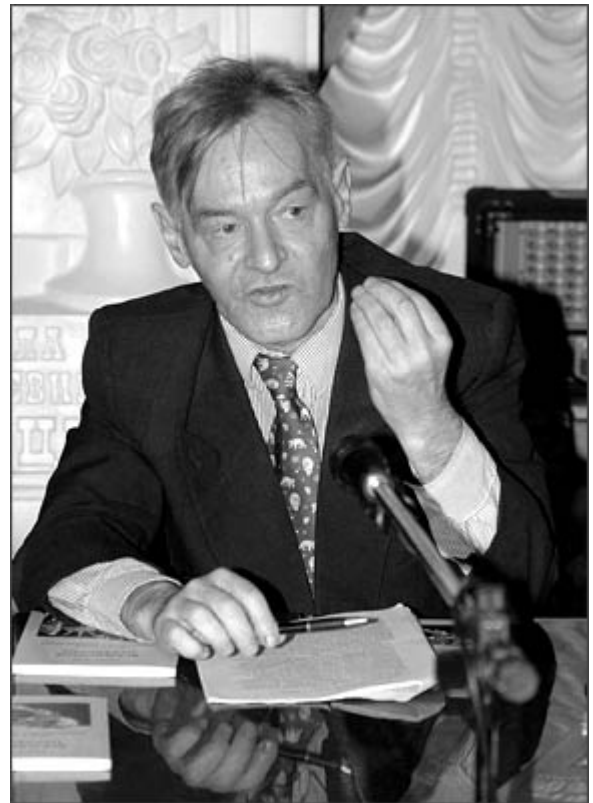
The modern world is like a train full of ammunition running in the fog on a moonless night with its lights out.

Robert Ardrey

In Traditional societies time was understood to be cyclic from the seasons to the stages of life and the great cycles of time from the Age of Gold to that of Iron. Oswald Spengler expressed a similar concept in his massive work *Decline of the West* with various cultural going through stages akin to the seasons. Sadly today we live in an age which is saturated with an unquestioning belief in progress fed by such a fanatic belief in materialism and rationalism that it is as dangerous as any form of religious fundamentalism.

Guillaume Faye looks at the state of the modern world from every possible perspective and sees disaster looming on the horizon from which we cannot escape. He examines the many lines of catastrophe which will lead towards a new Middle Ages.

The speed of our trajectory towards catastrophe is fed by fanciful miracle thinking, believing that science at the very last moment will solve everything and that growth can be endless, Faye continues and considers a range of modern illusions from the cultural and social to the environmental. At the same time man's obsession with intellect and loss of touch with his instincts and the earth fuels this process. The evolutionary process seems to have created an impasse where the mind is able to ignore the most obvious reality and clear physical evidence of oncoming disaster.



The media and culture self-censors and while admitting soft disasters such as climate change ignores the likelihood of the hard catastrophes which is just around the corner and probably unavoidable. It is frightening how easy we are convinced that minor acts such as recycling, the use of certain types of light globes and minor changes in consumption will make a lasting difference.

Rene Thom in his research on catastrophe theory explains how every system is innately unstable and various factors can at any stage, like a drop which overflows the cup, bring the whole edifice crashing down.



The illusion we place within our social and political systems is purely intellectual rather than real.

Faye offers an insightful, powerful and incisive look at the problems of the environment from greenhouse gases to pandemics. Of course the environment crisis will lead to wars over food and water. Such wars however will not just be about the environment; a clash of cultures is inevitable and has already begun.

The new stage of warfare is global, decentralized and terrorist. It is clear that Islam with its model of Shariah law is at variance with western values but political correctness and misplaced tolerance creates an ongoing risk both inside and outside our borders. At the same time we should not underplay the possibility of a war between the superpowers of America and China.

Europe is not immune with economic collapse likely to destroy the European Union coupled with massive immigration causing social unrest and conflict. Multiculturalism rather than re-



specting diversity creates ethnic conflict within the borders of a given country which leads to it being torn asunder as can be readily seen in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the United States with Australia not far behind. The sad fact is that all governments are ruled by markets and economics and not the other way around so policies are captured by big business and no real change is likely on a political level so they work solely with their eye on the next election.

Faye also considers social problems such as a lack of a western work ethic, the fall in western populations, an aging population and a consumer society saturated by sexuality and over stimulation which is also clearly driving our demise but on a cultural level. Consumerism is fuelled by overdevelopment, an obsession with progress and the unsustainable pace of western technology. It seems we are convinced that meaning will come from the latest model of computer, car or even the newest movie than finding it in community or ourselves.

Faye outlines seven distinct lines of catastrophe which he considers to be fairly inevitable; all are the result of modernism and human activity. Faye is not being a doomsayer just reporting the hard facts. He offers three possible post catastrophe models soft, hard and very hard, with his own prediction of a very hard collapse.

Faye ends this compelling work by examining the end of the cycle according to tradition in terms of the Kali Yuga. *Convergence of Catastrophes* is confronting reading, at times depressing and painful, at others a clarion call to be prepared for the changes that are clearly on the way. It is an important book which demands to be taken seriously.

Dharma Manifesto
A New Vision for Global Transformation
Sri Nayaka
Lulu.com (2012)
Web: <http://www.dharmanation.org>

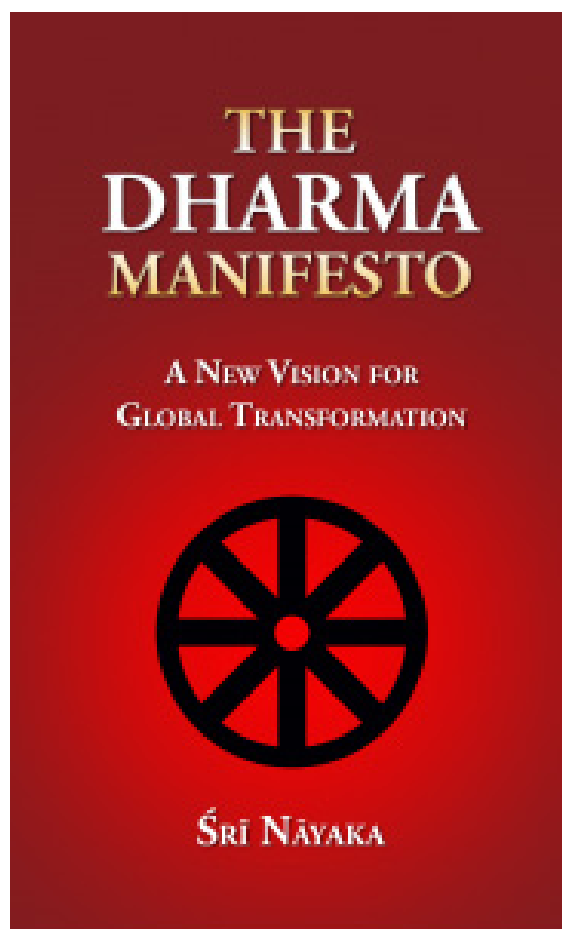
The Dharma Manifesto offers a new political and social perspective of the human condition based on the metaphysical vision of the Dharma rather than the reductionist views of biology and materialism. Dharma is defined as being the eternal expression of natural law, Dharma is not simply Vedic (the Sanatana Dharma) but is the common heritage of pre-Abrahamic spirituality.

The Dharma Manifesto is based on Dharma Nationalism where national states are based on the principles of natural law, the term is the same as Dhamma in Pali and Physis in Greek. Much of this natural law is expressed in the Indo European epics and tales from the Mahabharata to Eddas. Dharmavada avoids the conflict model of the Abrahamic faiths and Marxism and hence has the power to neutralize the effects the conflict model had has on the environment and society. The Dharma and instead posits a model based on cooperation while acknowledging diversity.

Nayaka discusses the organic nature of people, state and nation and the absurd nature of multiculturalism. His approach is based solidly on Tradition with a special reference to Plato emphasizing the wise ruler or philosopher king. This approach is based on the spiritual centre to all politics and encouraging every individual on their own personal developmental journey.

The many differences and inequalities are accepted while the nature of the spiritual heart of each people and individual is affirmed.

At the same time radical equalitarianism is rejected outright since it is reductionist in theory and practise and the natural verti-

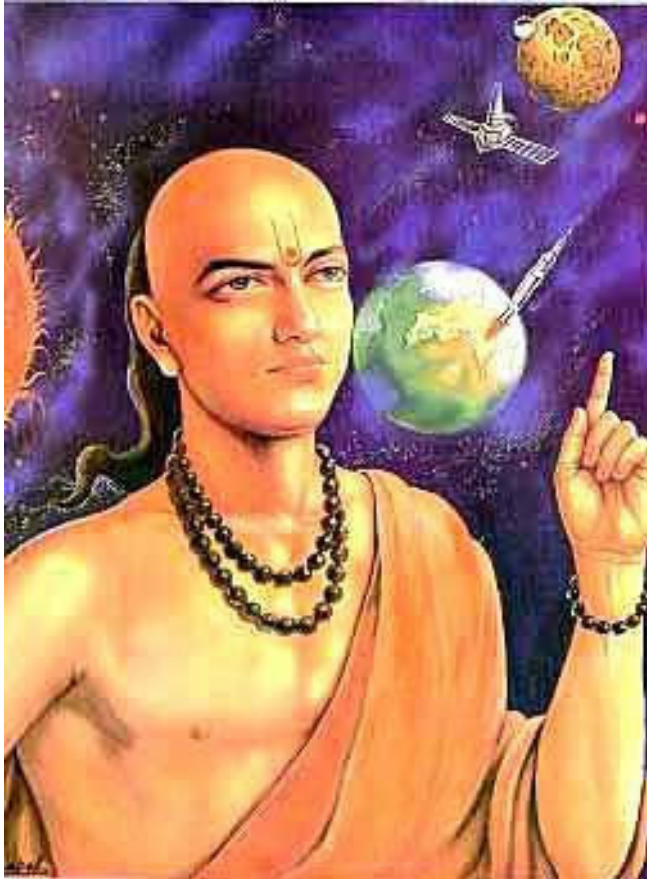


cal hierarchy of the spirit is affirmed. Sri Nayaka offers a fascinating overview of Indian nationalism and it's various perspectives and movements, while his ten points for Vedic renaissance are challenging and thought provoking. Nayaka discusses the work of swami Prabhupada and his understanding of both Varna (classes or castes) and the ashramas or stages of life.

We must face head-on the ideologies which standing in the way of the natural law of the dharma and these are grounded in Abrahamism as expressed through Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Marxism and to a lesser extent, Bahai.

Each is centred on conflict theory whether it be of class or between a





supposed exclusive revelation and other traditions. Abrahamism in all its guises is radically equalitarian and refuses to accept the qualitative element within human experience. Nayaka offers an incisive critique of each of these false traditions and their destructive role within world history, focusing in on such fallacies as equalitarianism, universalism, relativism and materialism.

Sri Nayaka considers the state of the modern world and puts them into the context of cyclic time as revealed in the Yugas of the Vedas and as discussed by Oswald Spengler in his seminal *Decline of the West*. He discusses the failure of atheism, the dangers of fundamentalism and the need for genuine Dharma based spirituality. Extending from this Sri Nayaka considers a very wide range of social and political issues from a Dharma perspective. You may not agree with all of his perspectives but they will challenge you to reconsider your position on many of these issues rather than taking the conventional secular party line. Sri Nayaka considers each issue in terms of the Dharma and in relation to the society and the spiritual growth of the individual.

In *Strategy* Sri Nayaka examines how we may bring about societal change discussing the meth-

ods considered by Julius Evola and the way forward for Dharma nationalism within non electoral activism.

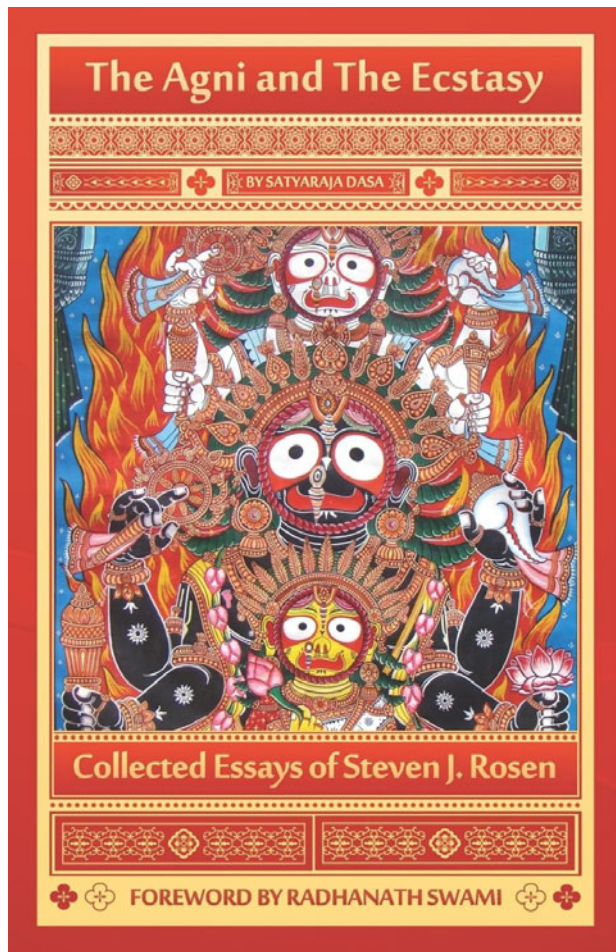
This is a fascinating work offering a revolutionary approach to political and social issues based within the spiritual framework of Tradition and the Dharma. It is certainly thought provoking and invites us to "think outside the box" for the betterment of ourselves and mankind.

The Agni and the Ecstasy
Collected essays of Steven J Rosen
ArktoS 2012

Satyaraja Dasa (Steven Rosen) is a highly respected figure with the Vaishnava movement and has written a large number of articles over the years. Whether writing for an academic publication or a yoga journal his style is direct and speaks from a lifetime of experience within the Bhakti tradition. This series of essays covers a wide range of subjects and explores the great breadth of the Vaishnava Sampradaya. It is presented in a series of parts which cover various key facets of the philosophy and practise of the Vaishnava tradition.

The first section cuts write to the chase exploring the nature of Vaishnava philosophy and scripture, from the nature of the Vedas to discussions of divinity, death, pessimism and surrender. There are some great introductions to bhakti and the philoso-





phy of the Bhagavad Gita as well as discussions of key scriptures and verses.

The Second section moves into Vaishnava practice and opens with the personal story of the Rosen's discovery of Sri Prahbupad and his experiences along the way. The personal stories in *The Agni and the Ecstasy* add an intimate touch to the work. There are essays on the various aspects of the Vaishnava life in practice including such subjects as service, renunciation, yoga, food and vegetarianism and a great essay on Ayurveda.

Part Three is a fascinating look at gods and goddesses from a Vaishnava perspective. The article of idols and deities is an extremely insightful look at images and the worship of deities, a subject which is sometimes difficult for a western devotee to get a handle on. There are discussions of symbolism and forms; I especially like the investigation of the meaning of the many arms which Vedic deities have. Part Four looks at Saints, sages and demigods and offers a great overview of the many deities and why they are significant. There is also

inspirational tales of the saints, devotees and sages.

Part Five explores mantra and music focusing on the Mahamantra which is the nexus of the Bhakti practise in the modern age.

I have always been impressed by the way Sri Prabhupad's devotees have engaged with science, ranging than simply ignoring it they work to understand it in terms of the Vedic tradition. *Forbidden Archeology: The Hidden History of the Human Race* by Michael Cremo and Richard Thompson comes to find and the follow up volume by Michael Cremo, *Human Devolution*. Part Five offers a series of articles on science which are challenging and thought provoking. The book ends with articles exploring the transcendent unity of religions.

This is an insightful and comprehensive look at the Bhakti tradition of the Vaishnava Sampradaya, it explores the beauty and simplicity of the Hare Krishna mantra and the nature of devotion. It will prove an excellent introduction to someone not aware of this tradition while at the same time the academic articles will deepen the understanding of seasoned devotees.



The Blood of the Earth
An Essay on Magic and Peak Oil
John Michael Greer
Scarlet Imprint (2012)

When I began studying magic in the late 1960's the relationship between magic and ecology was nebulous, to say the least. While there was a discussion of the importance of respecting the earth the focus of ritual magic was on invocation and evocation (among other practises) and there was little room for real ecological considerations. Even within the Wiccan movement of this period ecology seemed low on the scale compared to spiritual concerns with nature reduced to abstract concepts.

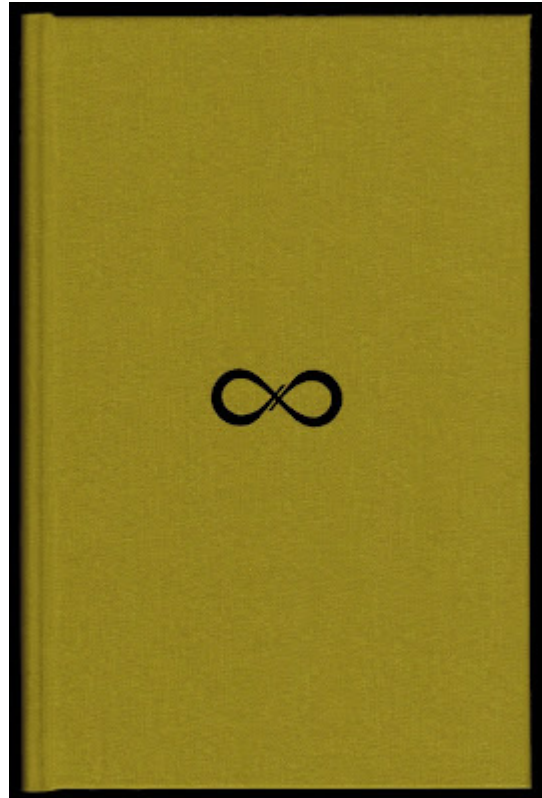
As time progressed the importance of a non-dualistic approach to the world increased as the "theological" foundations of esotericism and paganism came under scrutiny. The significance of the earth as imbued with spirit and a living ecological worldview as part of magic became to become better known.

Greer is both a very well respected author on magic and a futurist, his work hence encapsulates the new generation of engaged magician. He decries both the escapist approach of much spirituality as well as the reductionist tendencies of modern materialism.

The focus on this work is on the issue of oil production and the way in which Western society lives in total denial about the severe limitation of this resource. This dangerous self-delusion occurs both on an individual and industry basis. The oil industry indulgences in magical thinking as it places Capital as the creator of oil and the greater salvation of the problems of man in obvious contradiction to the limited and finite nature of oil as a resource.

We cannot consider the modern dilemma without considering the ethical ramifications of technology and progress. Greer also examines the nature of magic as an archaic use of the imagination not as seen as a variation of science as many modern magicians seem to express.

Greer offers an excellent discussion of philosophy, Neo-Platonism and Theurgy and its value in the past and now. Also discussed is the nature of initiation minus the hype and occur mystification, indeed Greer's style overall while erudite is down to earth avoiding undue occult speak.



Greer likens the illusions of materialism and the peak oil industry to the wonders and sights of lesser magic as opposed to true Theurgy. He offers an insightful discussion of when our beliefs and psychological structures contradict the facts from the ecological crisis to strange tales of UFO cults and the danger such self-deception can hold.

His guide to practical magic is different from most would expect and very challenging and thought provoking. Greer continues looking at the value of reading, knowledge and myth including modern myths such as that of the machine.

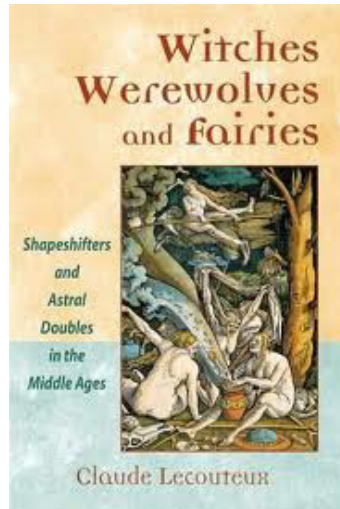
The Blood of the Earth is a very unusual book, it is not the type of title you would expect from a magician or futurist, yet one that really gets to the heart of modern ecological issues. At first it is difficult to get a handle on since Greer is taking such a new road in this field, yet if you persevere you will be richly rewarded.

The Blood of the Earth is available in 747 numbered volumes and 55 special editions.

Witches, Werewolves and Fairies Shapeshifters and Astral Doubles in the Middle Ages
Claude Lecouteux
Inner Traditions
(2003)

Claude Lecouteux is a professor of medieval literature and civilization at the Sorbonne and explores the nature of supernatural beliefs in a way not often seen in academic works. His books are always of interest both to the academic and scholar as well as to the heathen and pagan. His books are notable for their reference to a wide array of primary sources and his encyclopaedic knowledge of folklore, medieval studies and Germanic lore.

In *Witches, Werewolves and Fairies* Lecouteux takes on the tradition of the Double. In modern esoteric literature too often the Double is described in dry pseudo-scientific forms as the Astral or Etheric body with speculations about astral projection. While this is well and good such accounts lack any link to the great mythic traditions of our ancestors and this is where Lecouteux's work is so significant.



He opens his work with some fascinating accounts of journeys outside the body from both medieval Christian and pagan sources and tracing them back to their pagan origins examines the unique characteristics of the soul within early Germanic literature. Rather than having one soul, there was a shared view which seemed common from Greece right through to the Germanic tribes and the Celts than man had at least three "souls". Lecouteux describes these in detail focusing on the Flyga, the Hamr and the Hugr. His major interest is in the Flyga which is the genius, a semi-independent aspect of the individual which may also be related to the family line and the Hamr which is the double. He examines these bodies in relations to various mythic traditions including fairies and witchcraft, considering how the pagan tradition was adapted by the new incoming faith into a strange hybrid form.



His examination of werewolves is fascinating as he discusses these in terms of early Germanic lore relating to the projection of the Hamr to take on animal form. This shamanic practise, of course, was later demonised by the Church and hence became the foundation for legends regarding werewolves. For Lecouteux the transformation which occurred was always spiritual, not physical, and located within the shamanic tradition even if expressed in the medieval language of the cunning craft or witchcraft lore. Lecouteux finishes this insightful work considering the double in literature as the shadow, dopelganger and so forth and discussions regarding physical sightings of the double including its role as a foreteller of death.

The appendixes are extremely useful including a complex look at the Soul and the Double, the tale of Hambel and the Vardojer and a translation of the trial of the Livonian werewolf Theiss.

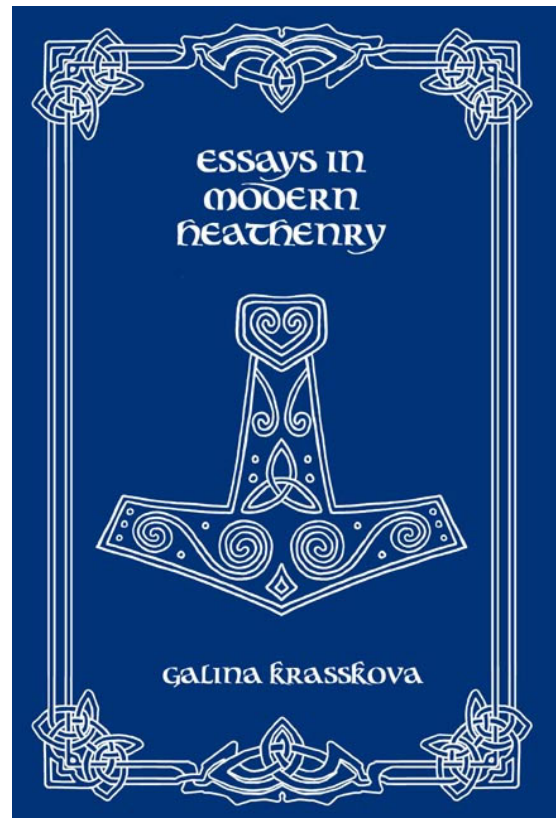
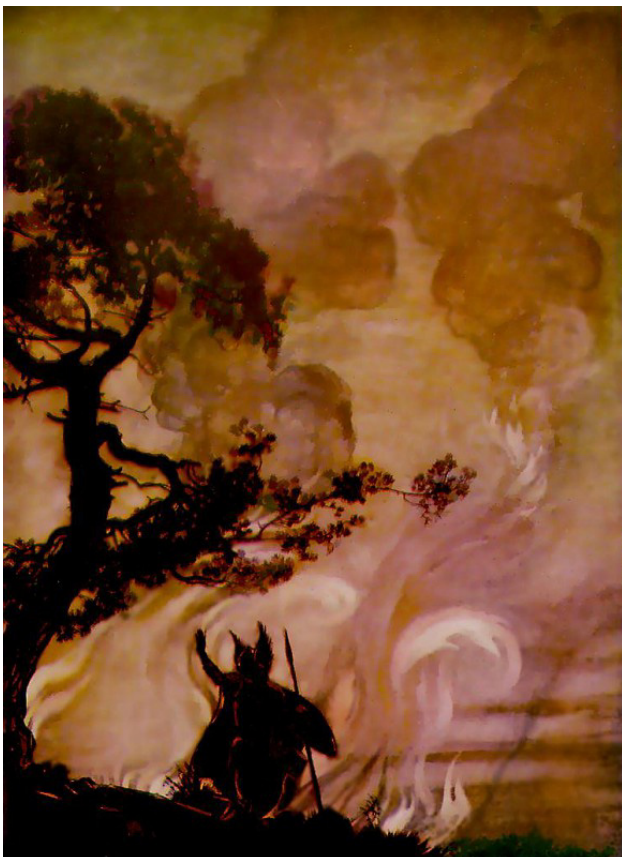


Essays in Modern Heathenry
Galina Krasskova
Asphodel Press 2012

Krasskova is a heathen and academic and takes a perceptive look at trends within modern heathenism. She offers four insightful essays covering significant issues and controversies.

The first essay examines the development of culture within modern heathenism; the delicate balancing of the reconstruction of earlier Scandinavian Heathen practises and the demands of the modern world. Krasskova also considers the markers of heathenry including right order, hospitality, right and the integrity of the Innangard. She also discusses the sensitive subject of other cultural pre-christian influence on heathen traditions such as the Sami which tend to be dismissed by modern practitioners.

In the second essay Krasskova considers the role of ritual and performance as central to the modern heathen movement. Many of these practises such as Seidr have led to major debates over the authority of established lore versus personal gnosis. Krasskova also discusses how ritual forms the link between the theoretical, objects and the practical and how this influ-



ences such practises as the Symbol and the blot. Issues relating to Christianity, accepting the familiar and carrying over prejudices and not acknowledging overt Christian influence on source texts is also discussed.

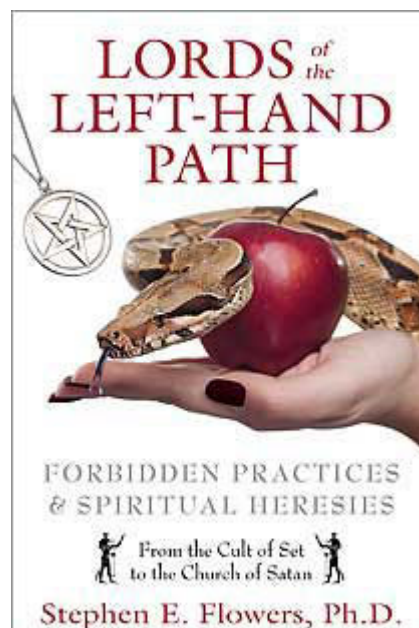
The third essay considers the revival of blot within modern Asatru with its different forms including animal sacrifice. She considers the nature of sacrifice, the role of the sacred king and it's relation to Odin. Krasskova offers an excellent summary of the traditions of heathen and pagan sacrifice in history.

The volume ends with a superb essay on the demonization of Loki which offers a very well researched discussion on the most controversial figures among the Norse Gods. She examines original sources, discusses current academic theories and considers his role as a trickster, breaker of boundaries and social outcast.

Galina Krasskova is a highly respected academic bringing her not inconsiderate knowledge to the subject of heathenry, a tradition in which she is also a practitioner. This volume is challenging, thought provoking and offers an excellent balance of academia with knowledge from within our tradition.

Lords of the Left Hand Path
Forbidden Practises and Spiritual Heresies
from the Cult of Set to the Church of Satan
Stephen Flowers Ph.D.
Inner Traditions 2012

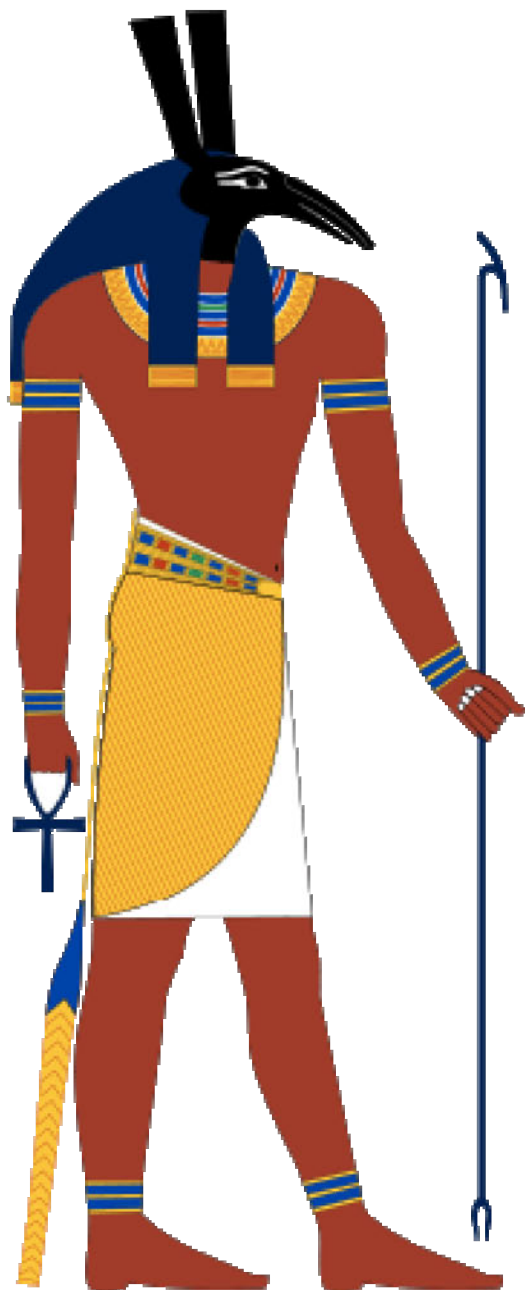
Lords of the Left Hand Path is the only comprehensive inside history of the Left Hand Path presently on the market, it is encyclopaedic in scope and covers the philosophies, individuals and movements that exist with the continuum of the Dark Path. It is exceptionally well written, objective and informed; every word seems to have been carefully chosen to avoid misunderstanding. It was originally written between 1989 and 1992 at the height of the Satanic Panic, a



medieval type inquisition against supposed child sacrifice by Satanists, the period was sensationalist and paranoid but was not simply a media beat-up, it damaged many innocent lives through unsubstantiated rumour and innuendo. When the evidence was examined with reason by the authorities it proved to be a chimera created by the fervour of paranoid Christian fundamentalists who claimed there was baby eating covens on every street corner. Since Flowers' book dared to shatter the illusions surrounding this controversial subject no one would dare to publish it so it was issued by his own small press, Runa Raven, it is great to see Inner Traditions bringing this informative and provocative volume to a larger audience. Unlike sensationalist titles Flowers opens *Lords of the Left Hand Path* with a clear view of the philosophy of the Left Hand Path based on an understanding of the objective and subjective universes and the difference between collective and individual immortality.

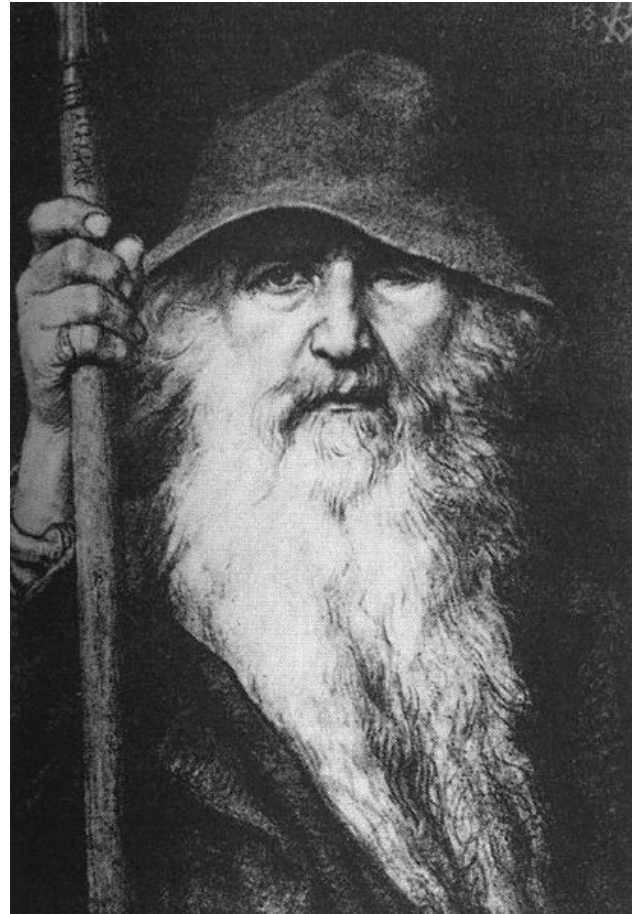
These definitions are precise and offer a backdrop for the extremely extensive historical sections of this volume. Flowers also differentiates between the immanent and transcendent schools of the Left Hand Path which are found today primarily represented with materialist traditions and those focused on the psyche and within the Church of Satan and The Temple of Set of Michael Aquino.

The historical journey begins with the eastern tradition which is highly significant since this is





where the term Left Hand Path originated as the path of the Vira or hero. In his study of the east Flowers offers a masterful examination of the Indo European traditions and of Hinduism in its many hues. Flowers also offers an extremely comprehensive guide to the Tantric tradition, both Hindu and Buddhist and its theory and practise. The section on Zoroastrianism is especially fascinating.

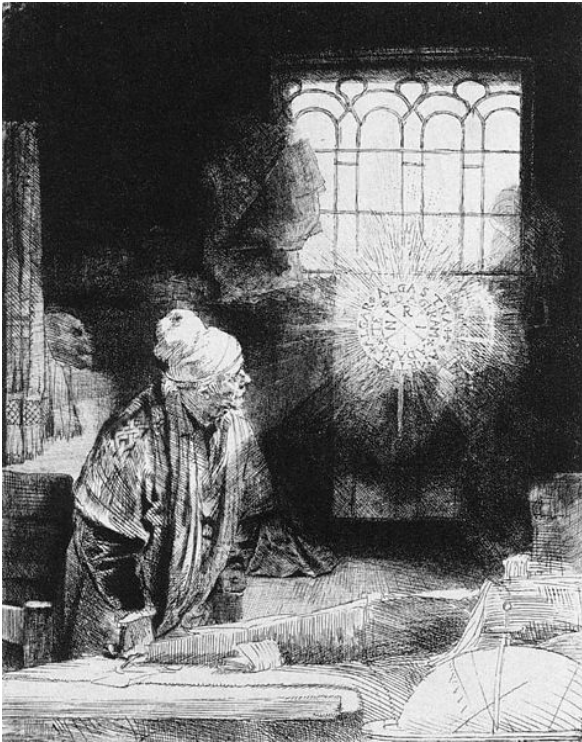


The Roots of the Western Tradition considers the heathen and pagan origins of the Left Hand Path and its later absorption of the image of Satan with the influence of Christianity. Myth, literature, philosophy and practises are carefully discussed and analysed. Flowers section on the Germanic Left Hand Path, where his own practise is based, is exemplary.

He examines the Cult of Set and the various Sumerian, Semitic and after Hebrew traditions. Of course he covers in detail the Semitic view of the Left Hand Path and the nature of Evil since it has had such an ongoing influence on the monotheistic religions and western esotericism and occultism.

The next section moves into the First Millennium with a look at the Neo Platonists and Gnostic cults and a controversial discussion of Jesus as a magician and maybe a practitioner of the Left Hand Path. Flowers also covers in some detail Islam, the Yezidis and related traditions.

The depth of his understanding of Christianity,



Gnosticism and Islam shows that he has a superb knowledge and can offer us a depth of understanding not found in many titles published today.

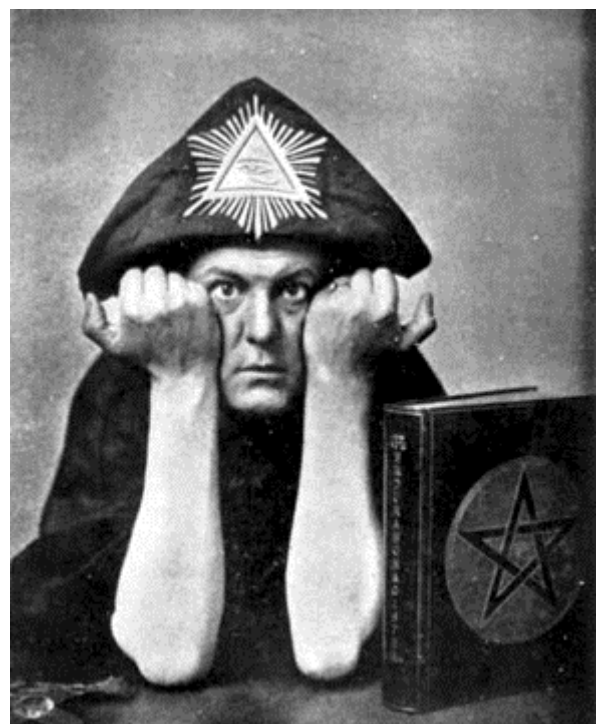
The Path of Satan looks at the complex subject of the Middle Ages from Mani and heretical sects to the inquisition and roving witch hunters which demonized pagan practises and turned

Left Hand Path practitioners into devil worshippers. This is not to forget the Churches turning pagan sites into churches, customs into religious ceremonies and old gods into either devils or saints ! One of the more memorable mythic tales from the period was the Faust legend, based on fact but inflated into a whole tradition with an amazing literary heritage.

Moving on to the period from 1433 to 1900 Flowers including such fascinating themes as Satan in Milton, the Hellfire Club and libertinism and the Marquis de Sade and sexual freedom, Goethe and the romantics. His critical examination of Marx and of Hitler and National Socialism is provocative, extensive and thought provoking, the way in which totalitarian movements using the magic of aesthetics and imagery to controls large populations is well documented.

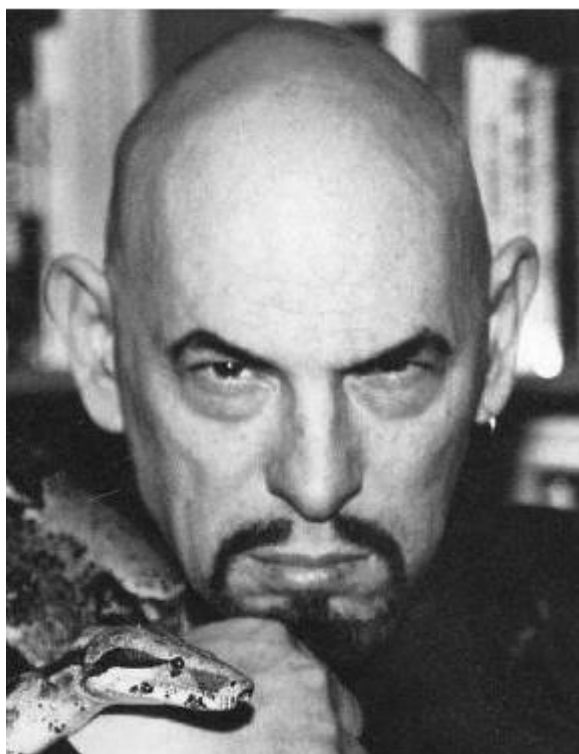
The Occult Revival looks at such well-known figures as H.P Blavatsky, Austin Osman Spare, Aleister Crowley and the various teachers of the fourth way derived from G.I Gurdjieff. He also considers lesser known but nevertheless important figures as Gregor Gregorius and takes a look at modern witchcraft. His expositions of Thelema and of the Fourth Way are detailed yet easy to understand, it is rather nice to get a guide to such traditions along the way !

The next sections are the most comprehensive





and cover the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. Flowers examines every aspect of each organisations structure, teaching, philosophy and practise with a history of their founders. Since these movements are embodiments of the immanent and transcendent approaches to the Left Hand Path they are extremely informative and insightful. He completes this astoundingly complete volume with a discussion of the heroic nature of the Left Hand Path. I am



astounded by just how much information is in this book, there is no padding or extraneous discussion, it is filled to the brim with information, observation and insight; it will become a classic in its field.

Stephen E. Flowers Ph.D.

Stephen E. Flowers, Ph.D., received his doctorate in Germanic languages and medieval studies from the University of Texas at Austin and studied the history of occultism at the University of Göttingen, Germany. The author of more than twenty four books, including *Hermetic Magic*, he is the director of the Woodharrow Institute for Germanic and Runic Studies and lives near Austin, Texas. His first volume, *Futhark*, single-handedly brought about a revival of interest in Rune magic in the English speaking countries.

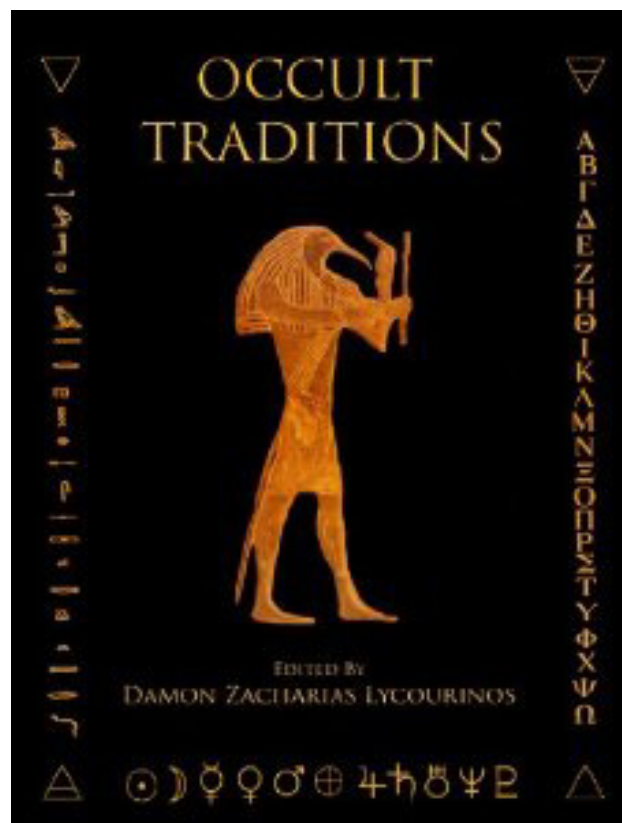
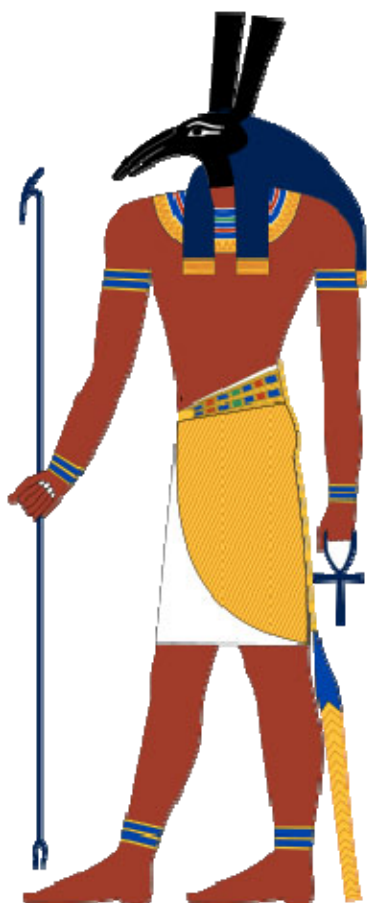
Occult Traditions
Numen books (2012)

Web: www.numenbooks.com

Editor: Damon Lycourinos

Sadly today so many books on occultism, magic and esotericism lack credibility and academic vigour, however this book is very different. It is of the highest standard intellectually as well as from the perspective of Tradition and spiritual practise. The majority of books on occultism are saturated with new age thought and lack not only intellectual vigour but knowledge of the “Sophia Perenis” from which they derive, this range of essays returns occultism to the position of esteem it deserves. Occult Traditions offers a truly exemplary range of challenging and informative essays covering a diverse range of Traditions and practises.

The introduction offers a solid exploration of occultism in terms of Tradition, academia and as a living spiritual path which fashions a link between “that which is below with that which above”. In this volume Tradition with a capital t and occultism is not reduced to theory alone, we are given some fascinating invitations to



practise and personal transformation. I have selected a few chapters to discuss.

Damon Lycourinos opens the volume with a fascinating exploration of the history of Greek magical manuscripts from Greco-Roman Egypt and then considers their practical use to conjures magical assistants or Parhedros, there being two sorts of tiers of esoteric practises in this system, Systasis presenting yourself to the deity and conjuring a magical assistance of Parhedros.

The theme of Greek magical papyri is continued in the essay by Aaron Cheak examining initiatory death and rebirth as expressed through the iconography of drowning. This may not be something which sounds practically enthralling when written in a review but you will be surprised by the depth of this symbol as a working magical formula.

Philosophy is often seen as a footnote to Plato and Neo-Platonism is a rich field of research for cosmology. In this chapter by Christopher Plaisance traces the Neo-Platonist influence on later theories of spiritual emanation and hierarchy, from early structures of theurgy to the medieval “Great Chain of Being” which had a hierarchy which spanned the worlds from various

classes of the demonic below to levels of angelic life above.

Plaisance's essay which shows the continuity from Neo-Platonism and indeed Plato to medieval Christian and occult systems is followed by a fascinating introduction to Grimoire magic by David Rankine.

Turning to the north and the rich magical heritage of Iceland Christopher Smith examines a late 18th century Galdrabrok. Smith focuses on a work known as the Two Icelandic books of Magic and offers an insightful look at northern sorcery without the interpolations of modernist conceptions or new age reconstructions. This volume is an amalgam of heathen and Judeo-Christian spells including some 178 spells and sigils.

Dining with the dead by Tess Dawson offers an unusual exploration of a lesser known form of magic Canaanite Necromancy with a comprehensive examination of how the Canaanites viewed death.

Omens are found throughout traditional cultures and religions and Gwendolyn Toynton offers an excellent cross cultural study of their significance, practise and many forms.

Lycourinos continues his impressive offerings with a fascinating exploration of the various forms of philosophic and religious dualism, with special reference to how in one form of dualism opposites are reconciled to create equilibrium



through the Egyptian gods Osiris, Horus and Set, Seth or set being one of the most intriguing deities of the Egyptian pantheon.

Lycourinos next offers a journey into the world of traditionalist Julius Evola, social critic, anti-modernist and one of the more controversial figures in both Traditionalist politics and esotericism. This chapter offers a comprehensive examination of his worldview with special reference to sexual magic or Tantra.

This is an astounding collection and I have only scratched the surface with my review of a small selection of chapters. There is such an incredible diversity of subject matter from Evola and Sex Magic to Sorcery in Thailand, Egyptian magic to the Great Rite in Wicca. Occult Traditions is a truly rewarding experience and every chapter has something new and challenging to offer.



Ecstatic for Dionysos
H. Jeremiah Lewis
(Sannion)
Nyasa Press
The House of Vines



As a polytheist I am always on the lookout for books which really communicate the experiencing of worshipping one of the Gods in the modern world. While there are lots of books looking at the Gods from a psychological and symbolic level there are still too few which examine the Gods as, well, as they really are ! Ecstatic for Dionysos is a superb book which represents 20 years of work, writing and devotion and displays the authors evolving understanding of his beautiful and enigmatic deity. The book is divided into three sections of essays, poems and stories and is a marvellous introduction to Dionysos. The way in which the author mixes together a clearly encyclopaedic knowledge of mythology with personal accounts based on his own experience is impressive, thought provoking and a joy to read.

The essays offer a diverse and insightful range of discussions on Dionysos covering everything from personal experience to art, philosophy, legends and history. Rather than being dogmatic, Lewis offers an "open discussion" and lets us make our own conclusions and find our own path. For example, when discussing the meaning of the name Dionysos he presents the various alternatives and encourages us to experience the various contradictions which are inherent within everything to do with Dionysos.

Dionysos is not just about drunkenness and indulgence, while his wildness is a significant aspect of his nature, he certainly has a more reflective side. As Lewis notes Dionysos is about authenticity above all else. We are offered a superb overview of the many ways we can relate to Dionysos with comprehensive historical references and insightful commentary.

Lewis explores the various forms, masks and mythological aspects and introduces us to the many enigmatic and sometimes contradictory

facets of Dionysos. Many heathens and pagans today are exploring patron relationships and Lewis offers some insightful thoughts on the subject with specific advice on the path to Dionysos including an abundance of festivals - at least forty in all! There is a lot of great advice on practises, devotion, festivals and of course the mysteries as experienced in the modern world. There is also lots of information on the sacred use of wine and dance.



A very fascinating discussion is on the Oracle of the Leaves with method and meanings, Lewis also offers a comprehensive guide to the symbols of Dionysos and a truly fascinating look at the other Gods through the eyes of Dionysius. This is followed by a series of insightful and knowledgeable essays on myths, legends and a consideration of Dionysos in relation to Jesus and other forms such as the Greco-Egyptian Dionysos.

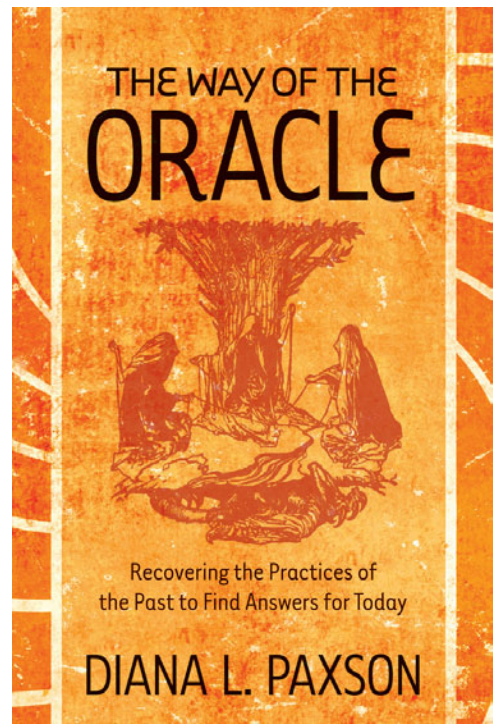
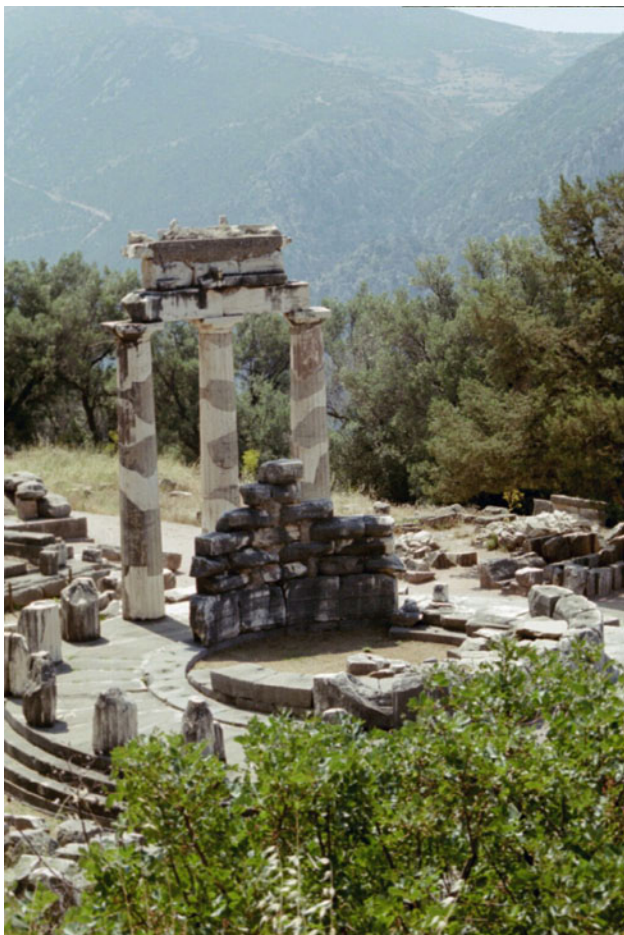
The poetry and stories offer a personal exploration of Dionysos and certainly illustrate the flexibility of Lewis as both as a researcher and poet and story teller. This is a marvellous volume which has so much to offer, the essays are superb and the poetry and stories entertaining, enjoyable and sometimes moving and powerful. I highly recommend this volume as a guide to the beauty and majesty of that whirlwind of a God known as Dionysos.

Web: <http://thehouseofvines.com/>

The Way of the Oracle
Diana Paxson
Weiser Books (2012)

Diana Paxson is a celebrated pagan academic, author and well known as a heathen and pagan. She has written a wide range of fantasy books as well as various titles on paganism and the Northern Tradition including a well known book on the Runes.

The Way of the Oracle combines an erudite and well informed approach to the art of prophecy with lots of practical advice gained from her personal and group experiences. Divination, so trivialized today with television psychics and phone call prophecies as far more respected (and often feared) in the ancient world. The term Oracle means to foresee and to be inspired by a God and had has far more significance than simply picking up a set of Tarot cards and doing some quick lessons online. Paxson moves on from the many techniques covered in her earlier worn *Trance-Portation*, offering more comprehensive and demanding practises.



While Paxson's own personal practise is culturally embedded in Seidr or Germanic oracle tradition, in *The Way of the Oracle* she takes a cross cultural but not reductionist approach, she compares the various the various traditions treating each with the respect they deserve. Paxson offers a comprehensive guide to the history of prophecy including the many historical oracular sites and then looks at how the art may be practised today. She shows a deep knowledge of historical sources from which she is able to guide us through the stages of modern practise from preparations and tools to trance methods and techniques.

Paxson explores the importance of authenticity within the oracular practise which is very different from the vagaries of modern psychism and the role the Gods play within polytheistic practise. Of course there is also the process of contacting and communing with dead and spirit helpers and other lifeforms beyond the veil. Paxson does not shy away from the dangers of such work and discusses the risks that come with the territory.

The second part of *The Way of the Oracle* is a practical guide with skills, exercises, pathworkings and oracle songs. This is an excellent guide to the spiritual path of the Oracle and while of special interest to Seidr practitioners will prove of value to any called to the path of the seer.

Fighting for the Essence
Pierre Krebs
ArktoS (2012)

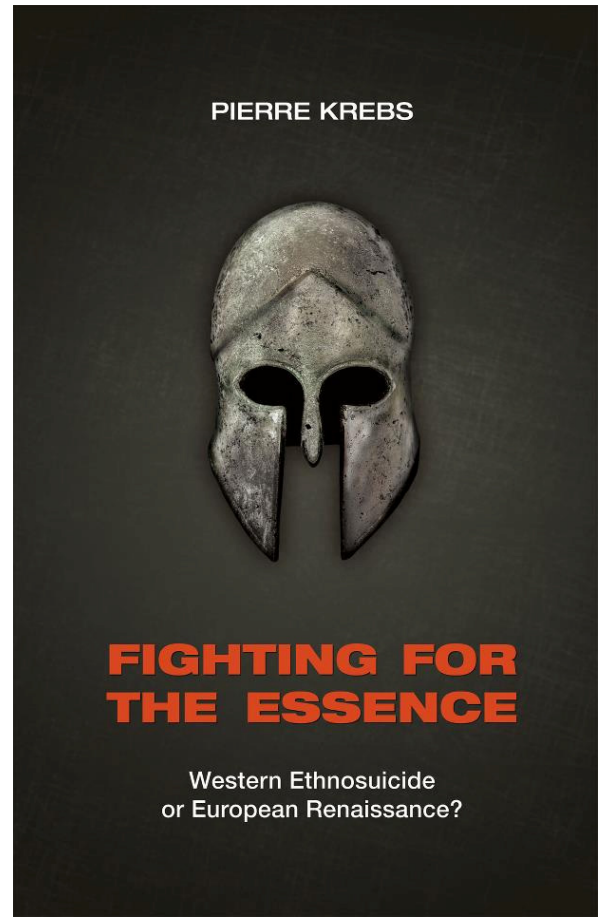
Dr. Pierre Krebs (b. 1948) is a major figure in the New Culture or New Right and is the leader of the Thule Seminar. He is a doctor of French literature and also holds degrees in law, journalism, sociology, and political science. *Fighting for the Essence* offers a devastating critique of modernism, multiculturalism and democracy. Krebs has a truly marvellous turn of phrase and writes with passion, insight and literary flair, at the same time this is a dense book with many references which needs to be read a number of times to be fully appreciated.

While Krebs sees issues such as immigration and the economy as significant he feels it is more important to get to the heart of the problem which is the conditioning that has plagued the western mind for the last 2000 years. Krebs compares what he defines as the European mindset Vs. the modernist mindset which he calls Western, he traces the philosophical underpinnings of the left and reactionary right as well as democracy to the equalitarianism of the Judeo Christian tradition.

While secularism may reign under the surface lurks Middle Eastern myths and legends which distort the political landscape. Our only real solution is to awaken and to return to the pagan Indo European traditions of our ancestors. Krebs focuses on the cause and the "big picture" rather than on the symptoms alone. His vision is based on the vision on Tradition from Plato to Friedrich Nietzsche and Julius Evola. Krebs shows how the unique one of monotheism and its accompanying equalitarianism destroys true diversity through the politically correct falsity of multiculturalism.

The west has ceased to be Europe, decadence and a focus on consumerism and quantity over quality originated from a loss of soul. Pagan ways were based on cultural cohesion and the individual as part of the whole rather than on multiculturalism and rampant individualism, quality and community rather than profit and consumerism.

The west is based on a Judeo Christian matrix whether in secular dress or not, it is not a true



culture but a degeneration. True Europe is based on Indo European traditions which stand against the values of the desert religions. The desert religions tore asunder man's relationship with nature and his culture and Krebs offers a masterful comparison between the Judeo Christian and Greek models of our relationship with nature.

The Cult of equality as found with liberalism and Marxism and embodied in the European Union works to create a New World Order based on one global market with profit as its only motive with truly disastrous result. It is only matched by Americanopolis the imperialistic exportation of democracy and capitalism to the world, creating a bland universal culture of conformity, which is marked by the formless man, isolated from history, identity and heritage and locked within his ego.

The modern quandary is an aesthetic and ethical one which involves the complete man. The solution is not looking back with nostalgia but preparing conditions for a new Indo European paganism to offer a new beginning.

Germany's Third Empire
Arthur Moeller Van Den Bruck
Arktos (2012)

Germany's Third Empire is a highly significant work in Conservative Revolution thinking, originally published by Allen and Unwin in 1934 it is a sad fact that it is not more often read. Arktos has released the revised edition originally published in 1934 with a new foreword and bibliography compiled by Alain de Benoist, who explains the book's continuing relevance. This is a book which I have for some years studied from an old copy and I am pleased to see it again available for study for those seeking an alternative to the modern failing political system(s).

Germany's Third Empire is a passionate and powerful critique of both the left and the right and is both erudite and persuasive, it many ways it combines great scholarship with a plea from the heart about the state of the Germany he sees around him. Arthur Moeller Van Den Bruck was celebrated for his literary knowledge including an eight volume series on great figures from Germany's history and translations of Dostoyevsky but this certainly is his most significant work on politics. Germany's Third Empire stands against liberalism, democracy, Marxism and capitalism and argues for a new type of empire. While van den Bruck coined the new Third Empire or Third Reich he was not a support of the National Socialists.

Germany had been humiliated by the unnecessary harshness of the Treaty of Versailles which ended the First World War and as a result was governed by a weak form of government known as the Weimar Republic under which the average German constantly suffered.

Moellers demands a rejection of all of the forms of politics that were on offer and a return to the traditional form of community based on values which are focused on the organic volk of the people rather than rampant individualism. He understands and appreciates the great value of hierarchy and looks aghast at the reducing of culture to the lowest level as found in both Marxism and Parliamentary democracy, both of which he sees as imprisoned by the worship of economics and money.

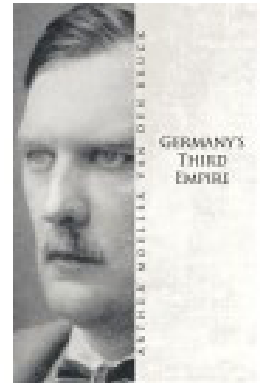
Arthur Moeller Van Den Bruck works his way through the various political systems of his day and finds them wanting, his critiques of each are persuasive and certainly stand the test of time. While this book can be read as a volume of valuable political and social history to do so is to lose much of its values,

the truth is that the conditions that existed in the period when Germany's Third Empire was written are not that different than that today. Obviously Marxism is no longer the prevailing force in Russia and has shown its true face as political system obsessed with economics in China.

At the same time under guise of egalitarianism and political correctness Marxism now exists under a new form within our collective borders doing more damage than it ever did before. At least when the Red Army was matching at your borders you knew where the enemy was ! Moeller's discussion of the growth of extreme individualism, the loss of community, the cult of money and the destruction of meaning is rather prescient. So much of what he discusses can, with little interpretation, be applied to the modern world.

This is a work that demands consideration, sometimes the language is passionate, combative and themes repetitive but that is because Moeller is trying to drive home the sad state that Germany was in during this period and how each of the political systems on offer were of little to no value.

Today the economic disasters of both the U.S and Europe and the problems of the modern world make this world exceptionally poignant and relevant. His criticisms stand today and for those of us seeking a way beyond the false dichotomy of left and right this is a must have book.



**Old World Witchcraft
Ancient Ways for
Modern Days
Raven Grimassi
Weiser Books 2011**



Old World Witchcraft is as significant for what it is not as for what it is. As a Traditionalist I have major issues with modern “consumerist” Wicca which seems to more and more be moving towards a new age form of new religious movement. While modern Wicca claims a link to its pagan past its practises seem to owe most to the shenanigans of Gerald Gardner and the modern world of ritual magic, not to mention more recently Goddess worship and feminism. At the same time Grimassi is not discussing what is best seen as “English Traditional Craft” which is focused on such figures as Tubal Cain and seems to be more of a Luciferian form of Sorcery than a folk tradition. Grimassi works to get beyond the modern constructions and examine what the original folk traditions of the Old Ways were.

One of major contentions within the study of Witchcraft has been the work of Margaret Murray, while originally an Egyptologist she took to the folk traditions and Witch trials and produced some truly controversial works such as the *God of the Witches*, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* and *The Witch Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology*. Her work became more and more eccentric and seemed to suggest a network of witches and sorcerers which beggared belief, it was as though they had an email and phone network and were in constant communication around the world during the Middle Ages !!

The problem was that the baby was thrown out with the bathwater; much of Murray’s research was solid even if her conclusions were exaggerated and her interpretations obscure. It became the new academic trend to believe that there were no pagan survivals in the medieval period and to write off all accounts as delusion or fantasy. The Witch Trials accounts were written off as all have been produced under torture, which they were not, and that was where the academic study seemed to conclude.



Luckily in more recent years a more middle ground has developed which has examined the likely survival of paganism in folk traditions, family traditions, guilds and with individual wise women, witches, Strega and cunning folk.

Grimassi offers a truly comprehensive, if not exhaustive, study of these survivals from classical times through the Witch Trials to the modern period. He clears away the dross considering what is rumour, innuendo and Christian prejudice. His examination of folk traditions is exemplary. This takes up the first three chapters of the book which is then followed by a fascinating look at the importance of plant and herbal magic to the cult of the wise.

Chapter five offers a witches grimoire which is fascinating and useful and offers new information about the witches tools. For example, the mortar and pestle is presented as a tool for spell casting, a device that creates interfacing with plant spirits and with the shadow, as well as a focal point for veneration of the Plant Kingdom.

This is an excellent book which works to reconstruct the ancient ways of the wise folk and is highly recommended.

**Traditional Witchcraft
A Cornish Book of Ways**

Gemma Gary
Troy Books
troybooks.co.uk

Witchcraft has become quite exciting today as a new interest has arisen in folk traditions and the old ways. Gary offers a fascinating introduction to Cornish practises, beliefs and beliefs. This is a superbly written, beautifully illustrated and informative work which focuses on a sadly less known Witches tradition, that of Cornwall.

The importance of understanding the regional role in witchcraft is significant since it stands against a model of standardized occult practise and emphasizes the role of local heritage, tradition, myth and legend.

Gary explores well known practitioners such as Yasmin Blight and Granny Boswell among others and the methods they employed, these descriptions accounts from original records.

There are many names for the wise ones from the Witch to Pellar and cunning folk and Gary offers a comprehensive guide to the nature of the cunning path and operative magic.

One of the most important foundations of this practise is the Red Serpent which is the numinous force which exists in the land and animates all life, of course this concept may be related to later traditions of the fairy roads and leylines.

Gary offers a marvellous overview of the other-world, faery folk and Piskies and the interpenetration of the world of the faery with that of the physical. All of these chapters are packed with tales and stories and insightful look at Bucca the horned god.

Places of Power discusses how everyday sites were the working locations for the Pellar and this is followed by a fascinating examination of tools of cunning which she covers in intricate detail.



The witches compass is a guide to the working circle with a guide to symbolism and rites and practises.

Of course no book on witch is complete with spells and The Trade covers all such operative cunning work.

Rites of the moon and the furry nights discuss celebrations and festivals with rites, the book is completed with a chapter on initiation, an initiation rite and glossary.

This is a very important work, today there are way too many "generic" works on Witchcraft which border on the "new age" and have little in common with the true practises and beliefs of our ancestors.

This book challenges us to follow the Traditional path and understand the Old Ways in context. It is a book I will read time and time again.

Magickal Diary and Almanac 2013

Kim Morgan

Cover Illustration Katherine Bean and

Elizabeth Taylor

First Published 2012

Dvana Publishing

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Kim Morgan has done it again... The overall usability of this increasingly packed Diary and Almanac is perfect. Spiral bound it is easy to handle, attractive and very readable. The green stylistic front cover illustration is by artists we have seen Kim use before, Katherine Bean and Elizabeth Taylor produce a very modern symbolic design which compliments the almanac; but it is the contents that make this diary stand out above all others. Being in-depth this is a hardcore working magickal book. How one can work magick without it or the information inside is beyond me, as it contains ALL the information one needs to perform ritual.

In fact in a way you are saving yourself all the hard work of having to know this information, which lets you get on with the work in hand. Kim sets her stall firmly working in the 'Old Western Traditions' and brings back the sort of information we should know and this is why I consider it to be more hardcore than fluffy as these are serious pieces of information which if



not used could be lost. As an overall idea the contents of this year are too many to mention and describe individually, so, I will give a brief description of what you will find.

The main observation this year is about using time within your ritual, and the use of time in magick. Expressing the point that it is important to ensure working at the right point in the day or the calendar which does have an integral place in magick, so Kim has included a section on working with the mansions of the moon which is overlooked in Western traditions. This Talismanic system, based in the Eastern and Arabic traditions is "*a magickal talismanic traditions in its own right*", Kim says.

The rest of the book is a refined collection of the festival of all spiritual traditions, good to know if you wish to work on any particular day that you should or could be calling on for your work. The Sun and Moon rising and setting times are standard now in the almanac, as is the astrological data and eclipse times and the

solar transit times.

What is fascinating is the inclusion of heathen festivals of the Troth and English Hof, as well as the Celtic Tree months, and on a daily basis, you can read the Welsh, Gaelic, Nordic names for each day as well as the days incense, tree, influences, zodiac ruler, number, and Celtic deity!

The Months also give information on the Welsh, Gaelic, Cornish, Norse, Icelandic, Anglo-Saxon, Celtic Tree, and Egyptian details.

We are talking masses and masses of information here!

I have no idea how this diary and almanac can be expanded any more, but I bet Kim finds a way, she has done so far...

This is an excellent product.

There are a few comments that I would consider to be helpful in future editions. I would like to see wider margins but, as we know, that would mean more pages which would make the cost rise, but aesthetically, I feel it needs it as there is so much info however one can understand why Kim does it this way in order to fit it all in. I would also like an index as the longer the diary is produced, the more is going in and it needs an index now or at least certainly in future diaries because of the massive content and lastly, I would like more room on the page to write in. That said, you do get more space than other diaries and again, more space would increase the price, and as this is a production issue beyond Kim's control, sacrificing the space and using a notebook for notes keeps cost down and makes it available to all pockets.

The diary can also be found on Kindle and Amazon as well as purchasing direct along with Kim's other publications including Deosil Dance, which comes out five times a year and her latest books, 'Understanding Wicca' and 'Wiccan Fire Magick' but, I do like to hold a book in my hand, if only for the aesthetic feel. Well-done Miss Morgan, 2013 will be a good year.

Carole Ballard 1.7.2012

**John Barleycorn
Reborn: Rebirth
Cold Spring 2012**

John Barleycorn Reborn: Rebirth is a two CD compilation album filled to the brim with songs at the cutting edge of folk. I first noticed these marvellous compilations with *We Bring You A King With A Head Of Gold* (2010) and was thrilled to find a further set on the market, indeed it is the best so far. It was originally a special download only supplement to *John Barleycorn Reborn* but as it became unavailable Cold Spring has, luckily for us, decided to make it available as a CD set with 33 tracks in all.

Rebirth is a journey into another world and time, that of leylines, ancient sites, pagan tales, spells and incarnations and folk tales. There is a superb range of musical forms from traditional folk style songs to instrumentals and even a couple of "experimental" folk tracks. It is beautifully presented with a booklet which explains each track and gives background on each artist. Just some of the tracks which grabbed my attention and to be honest every time I play it there are more and more include:

The *Wendigo* which is marvellous invocation of the wild forest creature of the same name, *Sedayne* by Corus Monedula which is hard to describe but powerful to experience, James Reid with his song *Kingfisher Blue* is moving and beautiful.

Clive Powell's *Ca The Horse, Me marra* is haunting and stops me in my tracks every time I hear it, regardless of what I am doing it I put everything down and listen to it. There are so many other songs I could list but I leave it to you to get this must have collection and enjoy.

Web: <http://coldspring.co.uk>



**Folk Flame
Odinic Rite
Compilation
OR Media**

In a world where we are bombarded with consumerism and meaningless entertainment there is a great need for music that resonates with the values of our Ancestors. The various compilations from Odinic Rite Media have offered an amazingly diverse range of music, all of which reminds us of who we are and our relationship to the Old Gods.

Folk Flame is the latest collection and is truly superb, it opens with the marvellous *Odin is My Guide* and then offers a diverse selection of music and poetry. The poetic pieces are a real joy, the *Fire Whisk* is a truly beautiful evocation, while *Reflections* reminds us how far our society is from Traditional life. *The Charnel Grounds* is an intriguing and challenging exploration of the Vedic traditional of death meditation.

There are also some excellent instrumental works with *Eternal Return* really awakening the soul as the CD concludes. This is a superb compilation and one that no heathen can be without.

Web: <http://www.odinic-rite.org/ormedia>



The Hunter
Madman
Entertainment
R4 DVD

The Hunter is a film which spins its tale on many levels; superficially it is a story about the redemption of Martin, a naturalist hunter, who in search of the Tasmanian Tiger finds his humanity when he lives with a dysfunctional family in trouble. William Defoe is superb in the role of the reserved and distant Martin who is constantly confronted by the intimacy of the family life he has worked so hard to avoid. The story of Martin's redemption is juxtaposed with Jack's dissolution, played well by Sam Neill. Jack tries to please everyone and ends up pleasing no one. His constant compromises, agendas and dishonesties end up costing him and those in the community greatly. As both characters follow their own path, we come to understand the conflict at the heart of the small town that of the battle between the loggers and the "Greenies" and the role of Redleaf, an industrial business who wants samples of the Tiger to use for possible military purposes. The family plays a significant role in the tale with two exceptional child actors but the most powerful "actor" is the one in the background, the Tasmanian landscape.

It is beautiful yet brutal and the cinematography



captures the sense of wilderness which could just hide an undiscovered Tasmanian Tiger.

The Tiger itself offers a significant element to the tale which could be taken both literally and allegorically. It is supposedly the last of its kind and yet a big business wants to hunt it down and use it for "god knows what." The Tiger as symbolic of the large number of animals going extinct, approximately one every twenty minutes, gives a potency even urgency to the tale. At the same time the film does not hit you over the head with its message, it meanders through a myriad of themes and leaves you to contemplate their meaning as the final comes to its dark and confronting conclusion. This is intelligent and subtle filmmaking.

The ending is certainly not a happy one and this is a melancholic reflection on the state of the modern world in so many ways. There are many themes explored throughout this film from personal redemption to destruction through moral compromise, environmental issues to the relationship between business, science and nature. There are many good Australian films, but not many truly great ones, in my mind; *The Hunter* falls in this category.



Blutleuchte

Gerhard Hallstatt

Foreword by Joscelyn Godwin

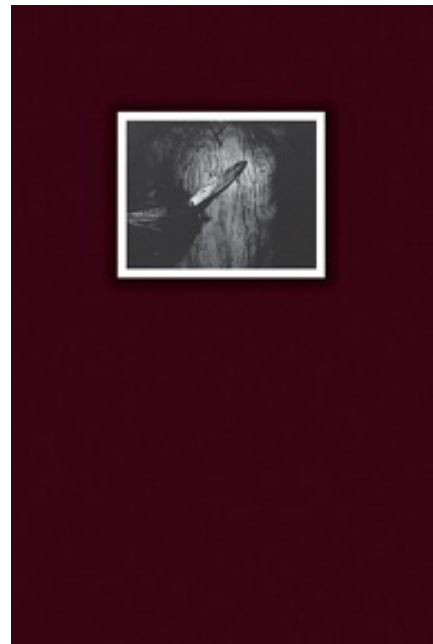
Ajna Bound 2010

Web: <http://www.ajnaabound.com/>

I remember when I first came across a copy of *Aorta*, it was an amazing bi lingual zine or booklet which challenged everything I thought I knew about occultism. In Australia esotericism seemed locked in the "Golden Dawn- Thelema" zone yet *Aorta* introduced a new world of European occultism from Otto Rahn to Karl Wiligut, Warrior Occultism to Julius Evola. At this stage many of these authors at the time were only available in minimal English translations and hence I looked forward to every issue as each one expanded my perspectives.

Kadmon (Gerhard Hallstatt) took a unique approach to each subject; he combined an academic study with his own personal experience (including travelling to many of the key sites) with a discussion of key themes and concepts. The way in which he intertwined these three strands made reading these booklets a joy. Since he was also a musician being the founding member of *Allerseelen* there was much coverage of music and independent art with significant interviews. To collect a full series of *Aorta* and *Ahnstern* was a difficult achievement and copies were expensive on the second hand market.

Blutleuchte is a compendium of all the issues of *Aorta* and *Ahnstern* which ran from 1994 to



1999 - 20 *Aorta* and 9 *Ahnstern* - with a vast number of corrections, updates, notes and comments. It has an informative introduction by Joscelyn Godwin and editorial notes by Tyler Davis.

The production values on *Blutleuchte* are superb, presented as a beautiful hardcover with brown and red text it is a joy to hold and read. Virtual books may be flooding the market but nothing compares to the experience of a book like this. *Aorta* and *Ahnstern* were significant works within their time and still are important today. Oft times you read a publication that was important to you years ago but now find it dated, not with these publications. They are still as challenging and thought provoking as ever and will now reach a new generation. With themes ranging from the Cathars to the relationship between Stigmata and Shamanism, music and the sacred, the runes, the Mithraic mysteries to the sacred warrior there is a lot to consider and contemplate.

Blutleuchte is 324 pages in length and printed with wine red and chestnut brown text, it is presented in a wine red cloth binding with a duo-tone inset photo and black end papers. The book also includes 16 pages of photos from Gerhard's archives.



The Journal of Contemporary Heathen Thought II

The second edition of *The Journal of Contemporary Heathen Thought* continues the high level of presentation and content. It is an exemplary work, beautifully produced with an eye to quality. When I reviewed the first issue I sung it praises and now with the second issue they have even excelled the first.



The new department of *The Journal of Contemporary Heathen Thought* that offers untranslated rare materials is exceptional, with the first offerings being insightful essays by the great rune masters Guido von List and Fredrich Bernhard Marby. The essays which follow include far more academic papers than in the first issue and are thought provoking, well researched and well referenced as well as being diverse in their coverage of Heathen studies.

The first translation is *On the Germanic Priesthood of Wuotan* by Guido von List is a fascinating study of "Listian" views on Germanic kingship, folk values and the relationship between the priesthood and poetry, study and the people.

The Origins of Matter by Fredrich Bernhard Marby is prefaced by an informative preface on the development of occultism and runic studies within the cultural maelstrom of ideas which marked the early 1900s onwards. Marby was clearly influenced by Guido von List, Lanz von Liebenfels and Theosophy yet his work is still original and meaningful. While this essay is rather eccentric and a strange mix of esotericism and science there is much to be gained from its contemplation.

These two rare translations are followed by a diverse and original range of essays and poems.

Stephen Borthwick offers a significant essay on how heathens see the physical world and their

role within it. He explores the world as part of a larger natural order related to the heathen model of folk focusing on traditional hierarchy with an excellent exposition of the platonic understanding of forms, ways of knowing and types of individuals.

Christopher Plaisance takes us further into the world of Platonism, polytheism and evolutionary thought. This is a complex work with a lot to consider relating philosophy to evolutionary science, Jungian psychology and finally to the heathen worldview.

Kris Stevenson takes us out of the rarefied air of philosophy to consider the roles of the hero, anti-hero and villain. Prometheus, Lucifer and Loki fit various roles and Stevenson explores each in some detail.

Zachary Hanson explores the various forces of entropy in the Norse system as well as in literature and how creation and entropy must work together for life to continue.

Stephen Pollington offers a comprehensive study of the Horned Man; it is well illustrated and extremely erudite. Pollington always produces insightful studies and has a truly encyclopaedia knowledge of folklore and history.

Stephen Borthwick offers a controversial but thought provoking critique of the primitivist tendencies within the heathen movement.

Each of these essays are comprehensive and the journal itself is nearly 300 pages in length so there is lots to read. Following the essays are some excellent interviews and a selection of reviews. The Interviews include one on the clergy program of the Asatru Folk Assembly, Bron Taylor on Green heathenry and John Michael Greer talking on polytheism.

The Journal of Contemporary Heathen Thought II is packed with insightful, challenging and above all intelligent content. This is truly an intellectual feast for the heathen; my only critique is that after digesting such an amazing meal I am hungry for more and impatient for the next issue.

Website: [Http://www.heathenjournal.com](http://www.heathenjournal.com)

Loki's Way

THE PATH TO BECOMING MORE THAN HUMAN

Traditional Sorcery for the Modern Age

Wulf Grimsson



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